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"The inspiration never stops!"
Courtney Pine
Celebrating 60 At Cheltenham

"I have no fear"
DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER
Truth And Soul From A Divided Nation

Into The Spider's Web
Rum Nights With Sassy And Basie

Norma Winstone & Kit Downes
The Dynamic Duo

Ian Shaw and Tony Kofi
On Song In Soho

RSD Reviews Special
The Big Record Store Day Jazz Reissues Reviewed And Rated

PLUS:
- Rob Cope
- un.procedure
- Simon Lasky
- Theo Croker Takes Five
- Michael League's Turning Point

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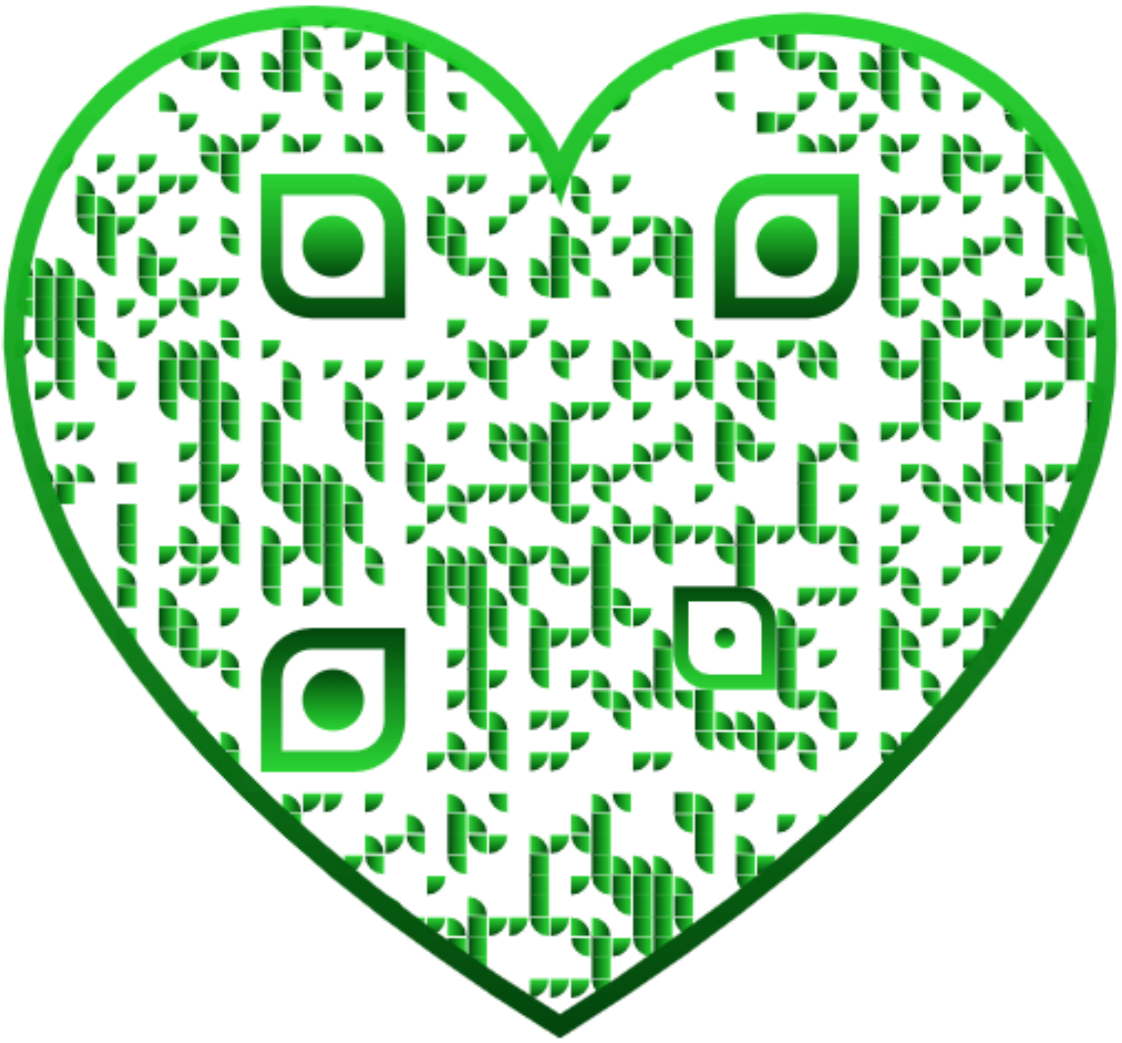

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Photo: Leighton Pope

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Photo: Michael Wilson

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Editor in chief
Jon Newey

Editor
Mike Flynn

Deputy editor
Kevin Whitlock

Design
Carolyn Allen

Instrument co-ordinator
David Gallant
Email: dpg.base.t21@btinternet.com

Gig Guide editor
Rosie Hanley
roseanne.hanley@gmail.com

Advertisement Manager
Ros McRae Tel: 0141 334 1735
Email: ros@jazzwise.com

Contributors
Tony Benjamin, Jane Cornwell, John Fordham, Kevin Le Gendre, Brian Glasser, Selwyn Harris, Nick Hasted, Mike Hobart, Peter Jones, Martin Longley, Eddie Myer, Stuart Nicholson, Edwin Pouncey, Brian Priestley, Peter Quinn, Andy Robson, Alyn Shipton, Robert Shore, Daniel Spicer, Gail Tasker, Peter Vacher, Val Wilmer

Photographers
Tim Dickeson, Roger Thomas, Val Wilmer, Monika S Jakubowska

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Marketing Manager John Barnett
Managing Director Ravi Chandiramani
CEO Ben Allen
Chairman Mark Allen

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News

By Mike Flynn, Kevin Whitlock and Jon Newey

For the latest breaking news visit **www.jazzwise.com**

Dhafer Youssef

Jacqui Dankworth

James Brandon Lewis

Dhafer Youssef, James Brandon Lewis, Jacqui Dankworth and more add their lustre to Love Supreme's 2024 line-up

The Love Supreme Jazz Festival has added more international jazz, soul, funk and world names to this summer's event.

Running from 5 to 7 July at Glynde Place in East Sussex, the bill now includes acid jazz outfit Galliano; boundary-pushing young drummer (and bassist Avishai Cohen's bandmate) Roni Kaspi; vocalist Alicia and bassist Michael Olatuja's Afrobeat-inflected Olatuja project; Tunisian singer and oud master Dhafer Youssef; UK pianist Andrew McCormack's Group featuring US bassist Kyle Eastwood; British soul-jazz singer Alice Russell; American saxophonist James Brandon Lewis; and indie-jazz songwriter/guitarist Rosie Frater-Taylor.

Also on the line-up is celebrated UK singer Jacqui Dankworth; multi-award-winning US vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant; bassist and singer Meshell Ndegeocello; Scottish pianist (and Jazz FM Instrumentalist of the Year) Fergus McCreadie; Japanese piano virtuoso Hiromi with her Sonicwonder band; Blue Note-signed US drummer and composer Johnathan Blake; eight-time Grammy-winning US bassist Christian McBride; plus jazz-rock drum icon Billy Cobham who appears with his Time Machine project shortly after celebrating his 80th birthday.

The wider headliners also include 70 million-selling US funk outfit Kool & The Gang, powerhouse UK vocalist Joss Stone, Brazilian pianist composer, and bandleader Sergio Mendes, British R&B singer Mahalia, US psychedelic soul band the Black Pumas, blues guitar sensation Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram, and London-based Australian neo-soul singer Jordan Rakei. *Jazzwise* is festival media partner.

For full line-up details and tickets, visit lovesupremefestival.com

Tim Garland celebrates 20 years of Lighthouse Trio with new double album and live dates tour

British saxophonist and composer Tim Garland makes a return this year as he marks two decades with his Lighthouse Trio, whose talents also include former Pat Metheny pianist Gwilym Simcock and drummer Asaf Sirkis, all of whom are featured on a new double album, *Moment of Departure*, released on 3 May via Ubuntu Music. The album is split between a first half focusing on the trio's high-level improvisational abilities on brand new compositions integrating the Britten Sinfonia's strings. The second half showcases Garland's prowess as a composer, arranger and conductor with the ensemble joined by leading violinist Thomas Gould, and UK trumpet star Yazz Ahmed (a special guest on the track 'Sub Vita').

Garland says: "That 'Moment of Departure', from the known, the notated, towards something new is a shout of fearless freedom. The compositions on this album all have crucial and varied relationships with improvised music, from string orchestra to intimate trio, and completely free-form music. Classical influences and visual art have informed me, as much as my jazz heart."

An extensive series of tour dates begin in the latter half of May, with some featuring guest appearances by Yazz Ahmed and Britten Sinfonia. Dates are: NCEM, York (plus workshop, 21 May); Stoller Hall, Manchester (24 May); Kings Place, London (album launch, 30 May); St Brides, Edinburgh Jazz Festival (18 July); Battle Festival, Hastings (20 July); Lincoln Jazz Festival (21 July); Ambleside Jazz Festival (with guest Yazz Ahmed, 30 August); World Heartbeat, London (6 Sept); RWCMD, Cardiff (26 Oct) Lighthouse Theatre, Poole (15 Nov); Rochester Cathedral Festival (with Britten Sinfonia, 16 Nov); Jazz at Howard Assembly Rooms, Leeds (17 Nov); Cadogan Hall, London (with Britten Sinfonia, 19 Nov); Cambridge Jazz Festival (with Britten Sinfonia, 20 Nov); Peggy's Skylight, Nottingham (23 Nov) and The Glasshouse, Newcastle (24 Nov).

For more info visit www.timgarland.com

Free stages, family events and Hotel Du Vin nights complete Cheltenham line-up

The 2024 edition of the Cheltenham Jazz Festival runs from Wednesday 1 May with a wide range of free, family and smaller concerts complementing the main headline programme. These include an opening night show from Parliamentary Jazz Award-winning vocalist Elaine Delmar, performing the first in a new series of intimate early evening concerts at the festival's Hotel Du Vin. These shows also include opera/jazz singer Gabriella Liandu (2 May), Jo Harrop (4 May) and Cherise (5 May).

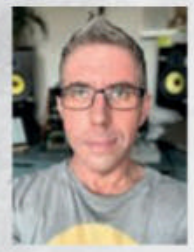
A new musical partnership between Kansas Smitty's reedsman Giacomo Smith and singer Lucy Anne-Daniels, inspired by the famous partnership between Lester Young and Billie Holiday, takes place at Dunkertons Tap Room, 4 May, while the Parabola Arts Centre presents guitarist Julien Durand's five-piece DREAMSCAPES, who explore 'Frisell-esque jazz rock soundscapes' with strong melodies from saxophonist George Garford and vocalist Lucy-Anne Daniels (12noon, 5 May).

In the main festival arena there's a busy Freestage programme from the Friday afternoon onwards with local and national newcomers across a gamut of jazz styles. Names to look out for include progressive Bristol soul-jazzers The Other Way, talented Gloucester musicians and MCs from the Tomorrow's Warriors Grime Supreme project, the folk inspired Andrew Duncan Sextet and emerging soul-jazz singer Immie Dash.

The festival's learning and participation strand has plenty on offer for jazz-curious newbies and younger listeners alike with workshops including singer-songwriter Namvula on African storytelling with interactive songs, and multi-instrumentalist Aga Serugo-Lugo hosts an afternoon of song, sounds, harmonies and musical discoveries. Kit Massey's gypsy jazzers The Hot Club of Jupiter will combine foot-stomping swing classics, original songs and plenty of fun, while the duo of singer Sara Colman and keyboardist Rebecca Nash lead a 'feelgood Family Sing'.

Jazzwise is the festival's media partner.

For the full line up and tickets visit www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz



Editor's Note

As Cheltenham Jazz Festival's arrival fires the starting gun on festival season – and as the April issue's jazz festival guide (now free to access on the *Jazzwise* website) and these news pages detail – it would seem that jazz audiences are back too.

However, it's a mixed picture as our friends at Brighton's Verdict Jazz Club have highlighted by their recent crowdfunding campaign to help raise money simply to keep up with the sheer cost of 'keeping the lights on' (despite many sold-out dates). The Music Venues Trust has also highlighted in the last year alone 16% of UK grassroots music venues have closed, 4,000 jobs have been lost, 14,500 events are no longer possible, and 38% of remaining venues post a financial loss – while the whole sector records just 0.5% profit margin on £501m turnover despite increased ticket demand. Audiences are facing tough times too. So any support you, dear readers, give to musicians and events really does make a world of difference.

Keep supporting live (and recorded) music and visit the Verdict's campaign page here: www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/the-verdict

Mike Flynn, Editor, *Jazzwise*

Emma Rawicz Jazz Orchestra, Norma Winstone and Art Themen plus new talent announced for Swanage Jazz Festival 2024

The Swanage Jazz Festival is back from 12-14 July with its biggest line-up since 2018, which includes a second Marquee on Sandpit Field (increasing the festival's capacity), while Arts Council England and Dorset Council funding has secured a 'new bands and new audiences' programme.

Among the 50 acts booked are headliners such as multi-award-winning singer and pianist Liane Carroll and her Trio (in their first performance at Swanage for 10 years); prodigious saxophonist and composer Emma Rawicz and her 20-piece Jazz Orchestra with their first gig outside London; top vocal/sax duo Ian Shaw and Tony Kofi paying tribute to Billy Strayhorn (see page 41 this issue), plus Mercury-nominated pianist Zoe Rahman and her heavy-hitting Colour of Sound Octet.

Also appearing are bassist Gary Crosby's Mingus Moves Band; the soulful sounds of The Wonder of Stevie with Derek Nash and Noel McCalla; plus The Printmakers with leading pianist Nikki Iles and revered vocalist Norma Winstone among its front-rank personnel.

Festival favourites are also prominently featured including Dave Newton and Alan Barnes, Clark Tracey Quintet, Art Themen's Organ Quintet, American altoist Greg Abate and the return of Henry Lowther's Still Waters. Additionally, bassist, broadcaster and *Jazzwise* scribe Alyn Shipton will be talking about his new book on Gerry Mulligan and later performing music from Mulligan's pianoless Quartet. The details of the free Festival Fringe in Swanage Hotels and Pubs and free outdoor concerts will be announced soon. **For the full line-up and tickets visit www.swanagejazzfestival.co.uk/tickets/**

Chaka Khan's Meltdown brings Nu Civilisation, Speakers Corner and Balimaya Project and more to London's Southbank Centre

This summer will see London's Southbank Centre present Chaka Khan's Meltdown, from Friday 14 June to Sunday 23 June with plenty of jazz names among the vocal diva's specially curated programme, which also encompasses R&B, soul and more to reflect the musical diversity of her own 50-year career.

The 29th curator of Meltdown, Khan will perform at the Royal Festival Hall twice – opening the festival with a hit-packed retrospective (14 June) and then closing the 10-day event with the first ever live performance of her 2004 *ClassiKhan* album with the renowned Nu Civilisation Orchestra (23 June). Recorded at Abbey Road Studios, the album is a string-laden celebration of the Great American Songbook, featuring classic jazz standards and iconic film anthems, including 'Hey Big Spender', 'Stormy Weather' and 'Diamonds Are Forever'.

Further names announced include the Brixton-based jazz-rap group Speakers Corner Quartet (17 June), whose 2023 album *Further Out Than the Edge* received much critical acclaim and they appear here in a special collaboration with the Guildhall Orchestra. Popular acid jazz group Incognito (19 June) celebrate 45 years of their debut album *Jazz Funk*, while up-and-coming vocalist Lady Blackbird (20 June) will give a preview of material from her eagerly anticipated new LP, due out in the autumn. Trip-hop duo Morcheeba (22 June) showcase their signature electronic sound while the Queen Elizabeth Hall hosts special appearances from Rahsaan Patterson (16 June), Mica Paris (19 June), Judi Jackson (20 June) and the House Gospel Choir (23 June).

Meanwhile, jazz-and-percussion powered West African ensemble Balimaya Project (21 June) will stage a high energy show in the Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer. Further names for Chaka Khan's Meltdown, including the full free programme, club nights and more will be announced in the coming months.

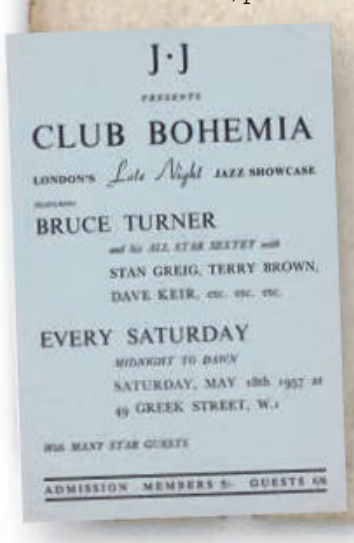
For full details and tickets, visit: www.southbankcentre.co.uk

BACK IN THE DAY...

From the late 1940s until his death in 2017, John Jack had his finger firmly on the pulse of Soho's jazz and bohemian scene. From playing trombone and working at Dobell's from 1956; promoting early be-bop gigs at Lichfield Street's Cottage Club and other Soho haunts and running Ronnie's Scotts Old Place; to managing Mike Westbrook and co-running the Cadillac and Ogun Record labels, John Jack was dubbed the 'Zelig of British Music' by his colleague Mike Gavin, and was invariably in the right place on the right day. One short-lived haunt was Club Bohemia, a Saturday jazz all-nighter during 1957 in Russell Quay's basement Skiffle Cellar at 49 Greek Street.

A main draw at Cafe Bohemia was alto saxophonist Bruce Turner, a softly-spoken man with a huge love of the captivating swing and sensuous balladry of Johnny Hodges, while being labelled a 'Dirty Bopper' by the trad-bores. Back in May 1957, Turner's All Star Sextet kept the midnight to dawn ravers in motion with trumpeters Terry Brown and Dave Kier, pianist Al Mead, pianist/drummer Stan Greig plus special guests, while illicit substances made-up for the dry bar. From the mid-1960s this very same basement would host Les Cousins' folk club's legendary all-nighters, the crucible of the widely influential new folk scene, where Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, John Martyn and Nick Drake drew equally on jazz as they did Davy Graham's exhilarating blues-to-eastern guitar technique.

Jon Newey



(Flyer courtesy of Mike Gavin/Cadillac Archive)

FUTURE MOVERS

NAME: Yumé NET (Mei Miyazaki Kirby)

INSTRUMENTS: Piano/Keys/Electronics

EXPERIENCE AND INFLUENCES: Although Yumé NET started out on classical piano at the age of six, her current style is difficult to pin to any specific genre, fluidly melding influences from jazz, experimental electronic music and a myriad of other approaches. In her music she crafts coruscating, glitchy soundscapes that explore what it means to be human in an increasingly online society. Her debut EP, *WORSHIP THE FEEDING HAND*, comes out later this summer.

THIS FUTURE MOVER SAYS: "I love exploring the possibilities of a sonic space and what I can add to it. Could this moment use some harmony? Maybe textures? What if I just leave space? I guess it's quite a playful approach but it's usually very intentional. It's about figuring out what will add to the story we're trying to tell, in the moment."

See Yumé NET play Ronnie Scott's Future Movers Late Shows on 3 and 4 May, led by Phil Meadows (alto sax) and featuring Gabriel Taylor (trumpet), Kielan Sheard (bass) and Jack Thomas (drums).

More info at www.ronniescotts.co.uk

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The trumpeter selects the five albums he can't live without

1 *Caliente!* by Gato Barbieri (1976)
"This is one album I cannot live without, and is on the top of my list. It's been in my sonic DNA as long as I can remember. I love Gato's sound! So human and alien at the same time. Very guttural, but also extremely beautiful. The beauty of the backing orchestra with brass and strings is to die for. This has Herb Alpert's production vibe all over it. To me it's jazz and pop morphed together at its finest."

2 *Soul On Top* by James Brown (1970)
"Hearing James Brown with the Louie Bellson Big band playing arrangements by Oliver Nelson is simply to die for. The way the Godfather of Soul phrases the opening jazz standard 'That's My Desire' is a masterclass in itself. Add in his take on 'Everyday I Have The Blues', and I'm in heaven. The rawness of Brown's voice with the meticulous arrangements of Nelson brings such a unique side out of James. It's still very clearly him, but in a more arranged setting with the Big Band. His power is matched by the ensemble and the interplay between them is outstanding."

3 *With Strings...* by Clifford Brown (1955)
"This is simply the most lyrically beautiful album known to man. I can listen to this on repeat for days at a time. To hear such beauty in technique between Clifford and the strings is to die for. His clarity of sound and the fluidity of his ideas show his creative mastery (and he's only 25 years old on the recording!) The song selection and sequencing lend to a very romantic energy of pure, beautiful harmonic and melodic bliss. The string arrangements are cinematic and bring such a sensual setting for Clifford's sound. This is one of his greatest recordings. Period."

4 *Duets And Solos* by Doc Cheatham & Sammy Price (1979)
"Doc Cheatham is one of my favourite trumpet players. He is my paternal grandfather but it's not me playing favourites. His sound is flawless and his phrasing is simply beautiful. He's in his mid-80s on this recording, playing duets with Sammy Price. To be playing the trumpet well while in your ninth decade is unheard of still to this day. You hear nearly a century of influence among these two, and yet nothing sounds old or tired but fresh and invigorating. All the while they never stray from the beauty in the music. In fact, it's all about the music on this record."

5 *Sound Ancestors* by Madlib (2021)
"Madlib has an undeniably unique sound. Everything he touches has a vibe. Always a tribal vibe. This album particularly travels through time and space using so many genres as a vessel. It's a sonic adventure that excites the senses and doesn't have any rigid aspects. It's a full-on rule breaker with samples, live instrumentation, vocals, crazy distortions, delays, and filters that never give a dull moment. For me the main thing to love about this album is how boldly different it is. It doesn't attempt to appease or influence the listener but what it does do is simply suck you into a galactic wormhole of sonic exploration."

Theo Croker plays the Jazz Arena at Cheltenham Jazz Festival on Sunday 5 May

John Surman marks 80th with new album and UK live dates

Lauded Brit jazz saxophonist and composer, John Surman, will celebrate his 80th birthday on 30 August and has already started to mark the occasion with his latest album, *Words Unspoken*, released in February on the ECM label (see *Jazzwise* 293) . The album features his new intergenerational band of UK guitar ace Rob Luft, Oslo-based US vibraphonist Rob Waring and Norwegian drummer Thomas Strønen. It's the latest entry in Surman's vast ECM catalogue which started with his first appearance on the label on bassist Barre Phillips' *Mountainscapes* (1976) and his own 1979 solo debut, *Upon Reflection*, with his back catalogue now including over 40 albums under his own name as well as several collected works and numerous collaborations on the prestigious imprint. The band set out on a series of tour dates that take in Finland (Helsinki, Tampere) and Stavanger (Norway), before two UK appearances at RNCM Theatre, Manchester Jazz Festival (25 May) and Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, London (10 June) and a final show of this run at Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall, Istanbul (12 June).

For more info visit: www.johnsurman.com

75 YEARS AGO – Lennie Tristano

When May 1959 saw the recording of not only *Giant Steps* and *Mingus Ah Um*, but also Ornette's *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* – and when all three leaders have already been featured in this series – perhaps it makes sense to choose another year.

1949 was also quite a pivotal period, though not in such an immediately successful way. For instance, the increasingly important Capitol label decided, with their big seller Stan Kenton off the road for more than a year, to try and market some adventurous smaller groups. So their in-house, ex-Kenton arranger-producer Pete Rugolo in a single week initiated sessions by bebop vocalist Babs Gonzales; the Miles Davis nonet; and a similar ensemble led by composer Tadd Dameron (using Fats Navarro and then, when Navarro toured with JATP, replacing him with Davis). But the boldest signing was undoubtedly pianist, bandleader and noted teacher Lennie Tristano.

Tristano's playing created virtuosic bebop-inspired lines whose rhythmic impact was less noticeable than their chromatic inventiveness, yet his students were encouraged to study swing-era stars by ear, first learning to sing their solos before transferring them to their instrument (without transcribing!) But the best-known students – people like Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh – sounded very much like their teacher's pianistics. His 16 May sextet session included their convoluted lines based on standards, but also four 'free' improvisations with no harmonic plan whatever. Two of the four were apparently destroyed by the production team, while 'Intuition' wasn't issued till 1950 (through DJ Symphony Sid's advocacy) and 'Digression' only appeared in 1954. Capitol's policy lasted less than a year, and they released no more small-group jazz until the 1951 Shorty Rogers session produced independently by Gene Norman. **Brian Priestley**

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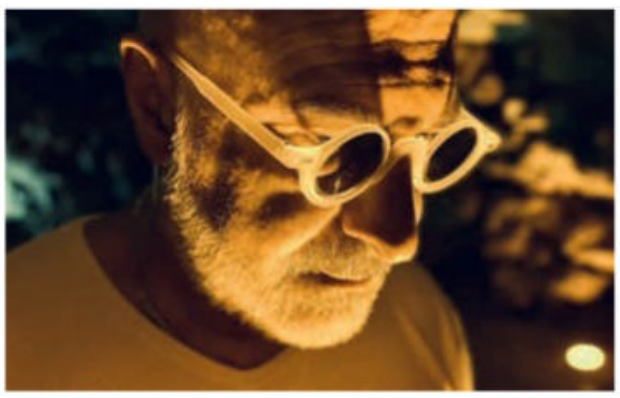
MAGNE THORMODSÆTER
L'ARTE DELLA PERSUASIONE
OZ104CD | OZ1104LP (Gatefold)
Street Date: May 17, 2024

Magne Thormodsæter is an ECM-alumni, bassist, and in-demand session musician. On "L'arte della persuasione", he fuses two worlds with the full force of a beautiful blow. A 35-minute story told in five acts, it pits a high-caliber classical ensemble against a jazz group. The result is captivatingly unclassifiable.

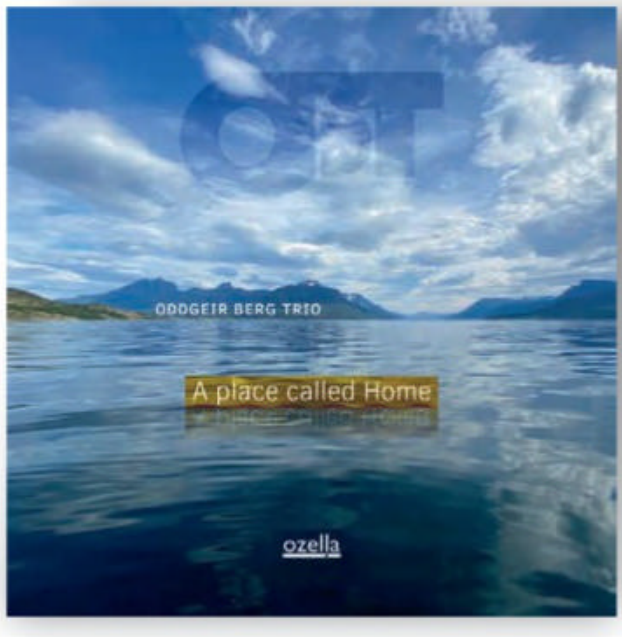
Violins: Melina Mandozzi, Mara Haugen, Vladimíra Ščigulinská, Hillary Foster
Violas: Ricardo Odriozola, Liene Klava
Celli: John Ehde, Jane Odriozola
Trumpet: Eivind Lønning
Saxophones: Kjetil Møster, Atle Nymo
Piano: Svein Olav Herstad
Guitar: Thomas Tellevik Dahl
Bass: Magne Thormodsæter
Drums: Håkon Mjåset Johansen, Ivar Thormodsæter

RAIN SULTANOV
FORGIVENESS
OZ108CD | OZ1108LP (Gatefold)
Street Date: June 7, 2024



Anger is a destructive force. Especially now, in the news, we can witness its impact every single day. And yet it is an integral part of the human condition. On his new album for Ozella, Rain Sultanov is confronting anger by writing some of the most heavenly music of his career.

Rain Sultanov – soprano saxophone
Vladimir Nesterenko – organ
Aleksey Miltikh – cello



ODDGEIR BERG TRIO
A PLACE CALLED HOME
OZ109CD | OZ1109LP (Gatefold)
Street Date: June 21, 2024

The island of Rolla is tiny and sparsely populated – a mere 900 people live here. On A Place Called Home, Oddgeir Berg takes us to this, his father's birthplace, for a concept album about the magic of nature, the spaces hidden in memory, and the bonds that family provides.

Oddgeir Berg – piano
Audun Ramo – double bass
Lars Berntsen – drums

All albums are also available from all common download portals. With every order via our web shop, we include a free CD from our catalogue.

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Bouncing down to jazzed-up Brick Lane

Peter Jones goes behind the scenes of East London's burgeoning new-talent focused jazz weekender

Claimed as the world's largest brewery at the end of the 19th Century, the Truman's site in East London's Brick Lane now plays host to one of the UK's most interesting and diverse annual jazz festivals.

Now in its third year, it was the brainchild of Juliet Kennedy, who was running the music programmes at a couple of the site's venues when she hit on the idea, and convinced the owners that it could be viable.

Now spread across 10 venues over three days, the festival's wide range of artists reflects the extraordinary mix of cultural traditions that exist in the area: the jazz comes heavily seasoned with latin, hip-hop, soul, electronica and reggae.

Although the old brewery ceased production in 1989, the historic buildings have been tastefully converted with an 'urban chic' aesthetic that preserves Brick Lane's edgy and exotically-graffitied vibe.

"The Brewery is focused very strongly on the arts and independent businesses rather than chains," explains Kennedy, as she showed *Jazzwise* around. To provide more performance spaces for this year's festival, she has added the community-minded Rich Mix, just around the corner on Bethnal Green Road, and will once again be incorporating the Village Underground, a converted warehouse that has been hosting live gigs for the last 18 years. Most of the venues, however, are quite intimate, such as the record shop Rough Trade East and the pub-sized Ninety One Living Room.

One of the performers appearing at the slightly larger Juju bar is the singer-songwriter Summer-Pearl (pictured right), who almost defines the festival's approach to jazz. Drawing on all the traditions previously mentioned, she is most at home in live performance – two years ago she was invited to perform at the Montreux Jazz Festival. Here, she'll be playing with a six-piece band, including two backing singers (sisters Makeda and Kandaka Moore), and featuring tunes from her 2023 album *outmysystem*.

Trumpeter Byron Wallen is one of the more established artists to appear this year. His Four Corners band, playing at Rich Mix, features guitarist Rob Luft (also appearing under his own name at Juju), bass player Paul Michael and in-demand young drummer Zoé Pascal sitting in for the unavailable Rod Youngs. We should not be surprised to hear some new takes on traditional funeral and harvest music from around the world, performed on instruments not normally associated with jazz, including conch shells.

At Rough Trade East, flautist/saxophonist Chip Wickham plans to feature tunes from his recent EP *Love and Life*, continuing to mine a rich vein of spiritual jazz inspired by the likes of Yusef Lateef and Pharoah Sanders. As well as regulars George Cooper (keys), Simon Houghton (bass) and Joost Hendrickx (drums), the band features rising trumpeter Eoin Grace.

Brick Lane Jazz Festival runs from 26 to 28 April – for more info visit www.bricklanejazzfestival.com

Skylla, Joe Armon-Jones and Tomorrow's Warriors Take Over for Jazz Stroud Fest

The Jazz Stroud Festival returns to the Cotswold town on the second spring bank holiday weekend running from 23 to 26 May. The eighth edition of the festival features headliners including keyboardist Joe Armon-Jones (of Mercury Prize-winners Ezra Collective) leading his own jazz and Afrobeat-influenced band; saxophonist Cassie Kinoshi joins electronica jazz trio un.procedure (see this month's Taking Off); renowned bass guitarist and singer Ruth Goller appears with her beguiling Skylla vocal project and Scottish saxophonist Matt Carmichael performs his jazz-folk-infused original music. Things get under way with a Tomorrow's Warriors takeover on the Thursday night (23 May) showcasing three emerging bands: newly formed hip hop-fusion five-piece BIG MASSIVE; the funky horn-powered Frontline and jazz-rock inspired drum prodigy Romarna Campbell. The line-up also includes emerging vocalists such as Donna Thompson, TLK, Ines Loubet, Tianna and Steam Down's And-Is-Phi, while Run Logan Run drummer Matt Brown appears with his horn-heavy 6161 project. There's also a label showcase from PRAH Foundation while Bristol's SpaceJams collective will be in residence for some spontaneous music making across the weekend.

For the full line-up visit: www.jazzstroud.org

Romarna Campbell

Ruth Goller

ECM

Photo: Roberto Cifarelli

Fred Hersch Silent, Listening

… a pianist, composer and conceptualist of rare imaginative power.
– The New York Times

When it comes to the art of solo piano in jazz, there are currently two classes of performers: Fred Hersch and everybody else.
– All About Jazz

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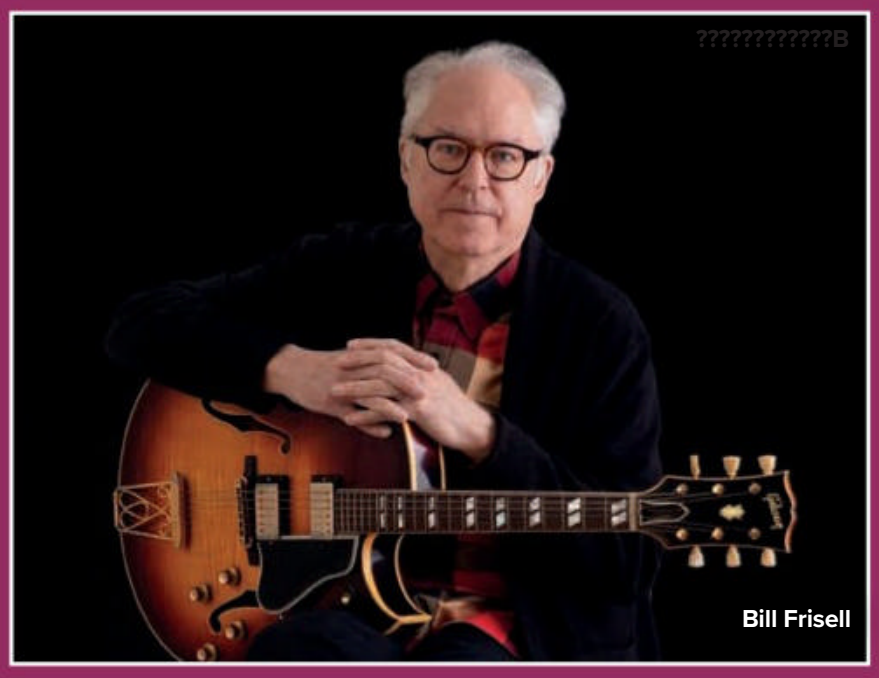
Charting the Jazz Message/May 2024



The *Jazzwise* Chart

What's currently spinning on the Jazzwise team's stereos...

1 Bill Frisell Orchestras *Blue Note*
2 Jasmine Myra Rising *Gondwana*
3 Kamasi Washington Fearless Movement *Young*
4 Alina Bzhezhinska and Tony Kofi Altera Vita *BBE*
5 Equal Spirits Wise and Waiting *Ubuntu*
6 Fred Hersch Silent Listening *ECM*
7 Mark Lockheart Smiling *Edition*
8 Magnus Öström & Dan Berglund e.s.t. 30 *ACT*
9 Squarepusher Dostrotime *Warp*
10 Yusef Lateef Ten Years Hence *Atlantic*

SOUND RECORDS

Jazz gems from the Stroud vinyl emporium
www.facebook.com/soundstroud

1 Alice Coltrane The Carnegie Hall Concert *Impulse!*
2 Cassie Kinoshi's Seed Gratitude *International Anthem*
3 Evolution David Lee Jnr *Soul Jazz*
4 Toshio Matsuura Group LovePlayDance *Brownswood*
5 Gilad Hekselman Zuperoctave *Newvelle*
6 Al Hirt Soul In The Horn *Be With*
7 Shabaka Hutchings Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace *Impulse!*
8 Joe Armon-Jones Wrong Side of Town *Aquarii*
9 Ill Considered Precipice *New Soil*
10 Jorge Ben Africa *Phillips*

SOMETHIN' ELSE

Jez Nelson Sundays at 10pm on Jazz FM

1 Alexander Hawkins and Sofia Jernberg Mucho *Intakt*
2 Alina Bzhezhinska and Tony Kofi Altera Vita *BBE*
3 Azimuth Azimuth *ECM Luminessence*
4 Fay Victor and Herbie Nichols SUNG Life is Funny That Way *Tao Forms*
5 The Core Roots *Moserobie*
6 Various Artists Talking The Groove: Jazz Against Racism *Jazz In Britain*
7 Tim Garland Moment of Departure *Ubuntu*
8 Wadada Leo Smith and Amina Claudine Myers Central Park's Mosaic of Reservoir, Lake, Paths *Red Hook*
9 Dan Weiss, Miguel Zenon and Matt Mitchell Even Odds *Cygnus Recordings*
10 Vidya Adi Shakti *Prophone*

EUROPEAN JAZZ MEDIA

Selected by Europe's leading jazz media

1 Chris Potter/Brad Mehldau/John Patitucci/ Brian Blade Eagle's Point *Edition*
2 Jasmine Myra Rising *Gondwana*
3 Michał Aftyka Quintet Frukstrakt *Multukulti Project*
4 Miklós Lukács Cimbiosis Trio & Ligeti Ensemble Responses To Ligeti *BMC*
5 AUROM O, svage sind *Nye Nor*
6 Sophie Lindmüller Obit Kid Society *Berthold*
7 Mark Lockheart Smiling *Edition*
8 Darius Jones Fluxkit Vancouver ITS Suite But Sacred *We Jazz*
9 Dee Byrne Outlines *Whirlwind Recordings*
10 Quinsin Nachoff Pivotal Arc *Whirlwind Recordings*

UNION MUSIC

Pre-loved and new jazz gems from the Lewes vinyl lovers

1 Sahib Shihab Seeds *Young Blood*
2 Isotope Isotope Test Pressing *Gull*
3 Sun Ra The Heliocentric Worlds Of... *ESP Disk*
4 Peter Kowald & Barre Phillips Random Generators *FMP*
5 JJ Johnson Volume One (French Press) *Blue Note*
6 Tony Oxley Solo Percussion *Victor*
7 John Coltrane Afro Blue Impressions *Pablo*
8 Chick Corea & Gary Burton In Concert *ECM*
9 Stomu Yamash'ta Self Titled *Decca*
10 Jimmy Guiffre 3 *Japanese Atlantic*

GUEST CHART: CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

Top tunes from the Cheltenham jazz fest team

1 Lakecia Benjamin Phoenix *Whirlwind Recordings*
2 Fatoumata Diawara London KO Montuno *Producciones Y Eventos*
3 Brad Mehldau Your Mother Should Know: Brad Mehldau Plays The Beatles *Nonesuch*
4 Theo Croker Love Quantum *Star People Nation*
5 Dee Dee Bridgewater Memphis... Yes, I'm Ready *DD Productions*
6 corto.alto Bad With Names *New Soil X Bridge The Gap*
7 Sultan Stevenson Faithful One *Whirlwind Recordings*
8 Trish Clowes A View With A Room *Green Leaf*
9 Jordan Rakei Wallflower *Ninja Tune*
10 Bettye LaVette Things Have Changed *Verve*

RECORD STORE DAY 2024 VINYL CHART

Compiled by our resident vinyl buff Kevin Whitlock

1 Sun Ra Pink Elephants on Parade *Modern Harmonic*
2 Art Tatum Jewels In The Treasure Box: The 1953 Chicago Blue Note Jazz Club Recordings *Resonance*
3 Shelly Manne Jazz From The Pacific Northwest *Reel to Real*
4 Yusuf Lateef Atlantis Lullaby: The Concert From Avignon *Elemental*
5 Bebel Gilberto Tudo *Music on Vinyl*
6 Brother Jack McDuff Ain't No Sunshine *Reel to Real*
7 Charlie Parker Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic *Verve*
8 Pucho & his Latin Soul Brothers Yaina *Ubiquity Records*
9 Gil Scott-Heron & Brian Jackson Winter In America *Culture Factory*
10 Sun Ra At The Showcase: Live In Chicago 1976-1977 *Jazz Detective*

THE BLUEPRINT

Chris Philips' maraud through new jazz heat grooves and free sounds

1 Isaiah Collier & The Chosen Few The Almighty *Division 81*
2 Alina Bzhezhinska & Tony Kofi Altera Vita *BBE Music*
3 Dal Sasso Big Band Chick Corea's 'Three Quartets' Revisited *Jazz & People*
4 Cassie Kinoshi's Seed Gratitude *International Anthem*
5 Jonathan Bäckström Quartet Jonathan Bäckström Quartet *We Jazz*
6 Equal Spirits Wise and Waiting *Ubuntu Music*
7 Kamasi Washington Fearless Movement *Young*
8 De Beren Gieren What Eludes Us *Sdban Ultra*
9 Jonas Timm Narcís *Double Moon*
10 Melissa Aldana Echoes Of The Inner Prophet *Blue Note*

JAZZ FM

Essential sounds from Jazz FM on DAB
www.jazzfm.com

1 Lizz Wright Shadow *Blues & Greens*
2 José James 1978 *Rainbow Blonde*
3 Alice Russell I Am *Tru Thoughts*
4 Sefi Zisling The Librarian *Tru Thoughts*
5 Kamasi Washington Fearless Movement *Young*
6 Blue Lab Beats Blue Eclipse *Decca*
7 Nubiyan Twist Find Your Flame *K7*
8 Alina Bzhezhinska and Tony Kofi Altera Vita *BBE*
9 Gary Clark Jr JPEG RAW *Parlophone*
10 Kandace Springs Run Your Race *SRP*

THE CUTTING EDGE

Mike Chadwick selects hot new releases
www.soulandjazz.com

1 Bill Laurance Bloom *ACT*
2 Snarky Puppy Live at Band on the Wall *GroundUp/RSD*
3 Isaiah Collier & The Chosen Few The Almighty Division *81*
4 Magnus Öström & Dan Berglund e.s.t. 30 *ACT*
5 EABS Reflections of the Purple Sun *Astigmatic*
6 Tom Penaguin Tom Penaguin *Self-release/Bandcamp*
7 Benjamin Croft We Are Here To Help *Galactic Receiver*
8 Kamasi Washington Fearless Movement *Young*
9 Ghost Note Mustard n' Onions *Mack Avenue*
10 Bill Frisell Orchestras *Blue Note*

NEWS IN BRIEF

FRISELL FOR TWO UK SHOWS AND ORCHESTRAS BLUE NOTE ALBUM

Guitarist Bill Frisell is back in the UK for two live shows following the release of his large-scale string-laden new album, *Orchestras*, which is out on Blue Note on 15 April. Touring with his longstanding bandmates, bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Rudy Royston (both of whom feature on the album), the trio appear at the Islington Assembly Hall on Wednesday 15 May and then in The Bradshaw Hall at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire on Friday 17 May. The latter concert is the first international date for Brum-based imprint Stoney Lane's 'Live' performance series. See page 36 for a review of *Orchestras*.

For more info visit www.billfrisell.com

WOMAD ANNOUNCES LONDON AFROBEAT COLLECTIVE, LAURA MISCH, AND AMADOU AND MARIAM FOR 2024 LINE-UP

The sonic melting pot that is WOMAD festival returns to its picturesque site at Charlton Park, Malmesbury from 25-28 July with what organisers describe as "an eclectic mix of talent, from newcomers to legends, unknowns to visionary songwriters". As always, the line up includes a vast array of genres from R&B, rap, world, rock, blues, punk and jazz all the way to New Orleans brass bands, *qawwali*, mambo and flamenco. Names so far announced include London Afrobeat Collective, Laura Misch and Amadou and Mariam, while headliners Young Fathers, Sampa The Great, Alison Goldfrapp and Baaba Maal will be topping the main stage.

For the full-line up and day and weekend tickets, visit: www.womad.co.uk

NUBIYAN TWIST TOUR NEW ALBUM FIND YOUR FLAME

The powerhouse nine-piece collective Nubiyan Twist return with their fourth album *Find Your Flame*, which is released on 3 May, and they'll be backing up the release with an extensive run of live shows around the UK. Weaving together global grooves, soul and jazz with electronic elements, horn-led melodies and spontaneous improvisation, the album features guests including Chic guitar legend Nile Rodgers, Afrobeat luminary Seun Kuti, Malian singer Mamani Keita as well as homegrown UK talent corto.alto, KOG and NeOne The Wonderer.

Dates are: Cheltenham Jazz Festival, Cheltenham (3 May); Loopfest, Shrewsbury (4 May); Norwich & Norfolk Festival, Norwich (22 May); Band On The Wall, Manchester (23 May); Project House, Leeds (24 May); The Glasshouse, Gateshead (25 May); Concorde 2, Brighton (29 May); Cambridge Junction, Cambridge (31 May); The Globe, Cardiff (30 May); Bristol Beacon, Bristol (1 June); The Leadmill, Sheffield (7 June) and Outernet, London (19 June).

SSBB: Reinventing the big band with visuals, interactivity and crowdfunding

Attracting new – and especially younger – audiences to jazz is a problem the music has wrestled with for years; and getting your stuff out there at a time when the London-centric media and record industry seems increasingly insular and timid, is more difficult than ever.

But one North-East of England artist and his big band group have a solution – and they're succeeding on both counts.

Michael Lamb, trumpeter, founder, leader and chief arranger/composer set up the Strictly Smokin' Big Band (SSBB) back in 2004 as a high school project; now in its 21st year, it took on new life during the Covid lockdowns – the band produced several full-scale videos to keep the musicians going and audiences engaged.

Their forthcoming album *The Strictly Smokin' Big Band & Friends* (released 17 May on CD, as well as the usual download and streaming services) will be launched with a prestigious show at the Fire Station in Sunderland; other shows nationwide will follow. The new album joins the SSBB's previous releases, *Harlem '58*, an album based on Art Kane's iconic 1958 photo ('A Great Day in Harlem") of 57 jazz greats; and *Strictly Smokin' Big Band Sings Ella with Alice Grace*, a tribute to the great singer Ella Fitzgerald. All three albums have the strong 'interactive' element SSBB have become known for – if you want to do more than just listen, charts and 'playalongs' are available to download from the band website; so, you too can join the band!

"I've got a good contacts book, and so I knew plenty of soloists who wanted to get involved," says Michael. "The challenge is to create new arrangements and keep things fresh. Many people have this image of big band music being stuffy but it's often wild and experimental, there's places for musicians to cut loose. I love the big band format, there's so much you can do with it.

"We've also worked for years to bring in a younger audience, and more recently our use of visuals on our *Harlem '58* and *Ella & Ellington* theatre shows has attracted another demographic – it's not necessarily the kind of jazz you play that keeps new audiences away, but how you present it; how you defy expectation and prejudice.

"The regions of the UK get left behind in general, this is especially so with jazz, and even more so with big bands! Part of the drive behind this album is to prove that big band jazz can thrive outside London."

Given how difficult it can be to fund recording projects, Michael set up a slick crowdfunding site and supported his efforts with a social media and YouTube campaigns. The result was that they raised the money needed in just 56 days; this money was match-funded by a North East arts organisation.

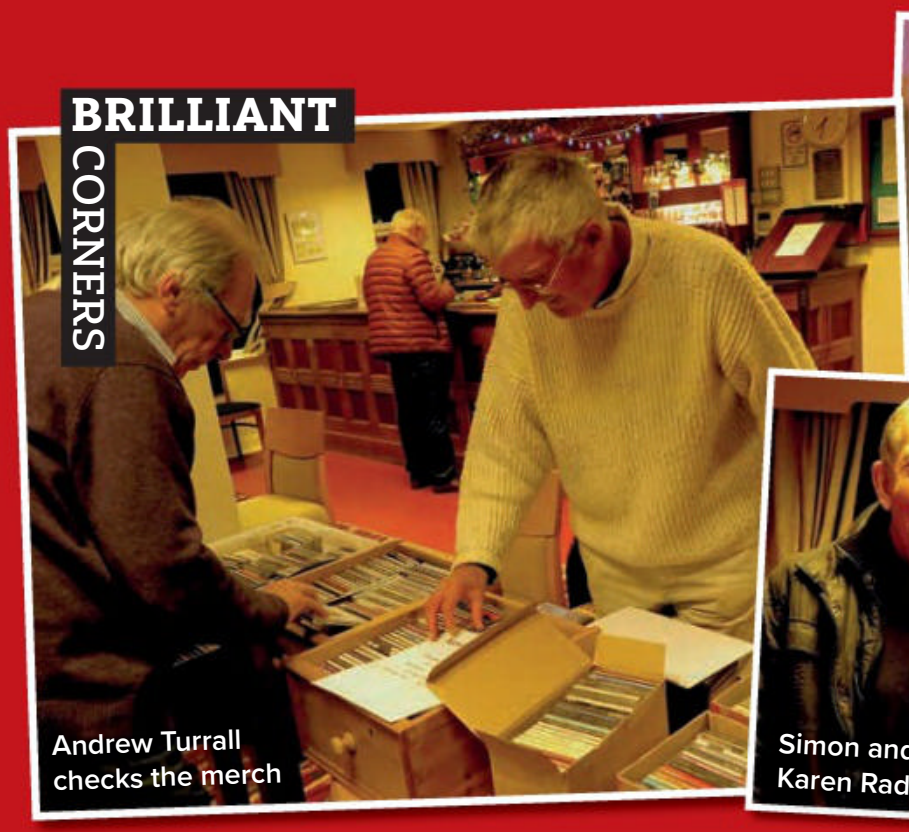
"We created a funding and reached out, via word of mouth, social media or email [we'd built up a 2,000-strong mailing list locally and internationally], to people we knew, or who we thought might be interested in purchasing an album in advance. And they were! It was important to offer them something as a reward, whether it was exclusive tracks, early downloads, mentions on the sleeves and so on; what you get depends on what you give.

As for the music, "I like the element of surprise, drawing people in with something familiar and then throwing in a few curveballs," comments Michael. "This is borne out by both the choices of tunes on the new album, and the way they're presented [see review in next issue].

"I hope we'll surprise everyone with The *Strictly Smokin' Big Band & Friends* and we're looking forward to everyone hearing it and presenting our music to some live audiences!"

Kevin Whitlock

The SSBB will be launching their new album at the Fire Station, Sunderland on 17 May. Special guests include Paul Booth, Bruce Adams and Alan Barnes. A nationwide tour follows – see www.strictly-smokin.co.uk


Andrew Turrall checks the merch

Sarah Oschlag Quartet

Simon and Karen Radford

The Victory Club

CHELTENHAM JAZZ CLUB HITS 40

TONY BENJAMIN visits the storied volunteer-run West of England venue as it enters its fifth decade

Cheltenham now boasts a prestigious annual jazz festival but back in the 1980s things were not so great for its jazz-loving citizens.

"It was pretty dire," recalls Cheltenham Jazz Club chair Gil Emery. "A few trad things in pubs, some blues from time to time ..."

The yearly Cheltenham Music Festival was focused on classical music, but in 1984 they invited Nod Knowles – then the South West's Jazz Development Officer - to programme some events. After one of those gigs Nod stood up, along with local architect and jazz drummer Simon Radford, and called for volunteers to help set up a jazz club.

"Simon was the key figure," Nod affirms. "He got together the committee and they began running gigs." Thus, in 1984, was born the Cheltenham Jazz Club – a volunteer-run jazz haven now celebrating its 40th anniversary.

With Simon Radford as its first chair – a post he would tirelessly hold for 35 years before stepping down due to ill health – and a committee comprising a keen group of friends, the club launched itself at Cheltenham's Queen's Hotel in October 1984.

There is some debate as to whether their first gig was the invigorating Afro-Latin music of Julian Bahula's Jazz Afrika or the equally lively Latin-jazz of The Guest Stars (both played that year). What is certain is that good-sized audiences came from the outset thanks to Radford's insistence that they only book national and international acts. This resulted in a cavalcade of big-name visitors including the great Archie Shepp who memorably played the Queen's Hotel in May 1985.

"That was standing room only," Emery remembers. "There were about 300 people there and it probably broke all the fire regulations, but it was a fantastic evening."

It went down well with Shepp, too, whose quartet returned to play for the club's 10th anniversary in 1994.

The long gig list painstakingly assembled from boxes of old fliers, invoices and tickets by Karen Radford, Simon's wife, reads like a timeline of the jazz world: Teddy Edwards, Red Rodney, Bobby Wellins, Humphrey Lyttelton, Courtney Pine, Stan Tracey, John Taylor, Ian Carr, Bheki Mseleku, Julian Joseph ... Committee member Paul Jenkins, himself a guitarist, remembers great sessions from Tal Farlow as well as a lively night with ex-James Brown saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis: "We'd tried for years to get him. When they finished with 'I Feel Good' he got the audience to sing along - a Cheltenham audience singing James Brown! They were really enjoying themselves."

> ***"The new musicians bring in a younger audience which is so important for keeping the music alive"***

Naturally over 40 years, there've been ups and downs in the club's fortunes; and they have moved venues from the Queens Hotel to the Town Hall Pillar Room, eventually settling in 2012 at the Victory Club. An imposing Regency building dedicated to supporting former service personnel, the Victory Club's conveniently-sized ballroom comfortably houses the Club's monthly audiences of 50-80, including many regulars.

One financial lifeline for the club has been selling records, and Andrew Turrall has been involved in this since the earliest days, running stalls at club nights and jazz festivals and now online as well. He remembers taking over £1,000 on some nights at Cheltenham Jazz Festival but there were disappointments: "One time John Taylor was playing and I'd made sure to get all of his recordings but we didn't sell a single one!" His stand-out gig was Max Roach in 1989, not least because Roach spent nearly half an hour talking with Turrall's schoolboy son, an erstwhile drummer.

Now it's a case of '40 years on' with October's celebration gig promising an all-star sextet fronted by Alan Barnes and Art Themen – both long-standing club regulars. Nod Knowles is impressed: "They've done such good work, a lot of significant gigs. I don't think there's another volunteer-run organisation in the West country that's been going that long."

Andrew Turrall puts their longevity down to independent-mindedness: "The reason we've lasted so well was we followed our noses and didn't take advice from anyone."

For committee member Spencer Evans, the club has been a musical education that's still ongoing: "When I was very young back in the 80s we were getting all those big American names and I just took it for granted. Looking back I realise how big those names were. But the standard of local grass roots jazz has improved enormously in those 40 years – it's been a seismic change and there's so much that's interesting and exciting in the jazz scene now.

"A lot of what the new musicians are doing brings in a younger audience which is so important for keeping the music alive." And it's people like him and his fellow volunteers that will be keeping the music alive in Cheltenham, hopefully for another 40 years – or more.

Photos: Tony Benjamin

TIM GARLAND
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30 MAY London Kings Place - *official album launch*
18 JUL Edinburgh Jazz Festival @ St. Bride's
20 JUL Hastings - Battle Jazz Festival
21 JUL Lincoln Jazz Festival
30 AUG Ambleside Days*
06 SEP London - World Heartbeat Embassy Gardens*
26 OCT Cardiff - RWCMD
15 NOV Poole - Lighthouse
16 NOV Rochester - Cathedral Festival**
17 NOV Leeds - Howard Assembly Room
19 NOV London - EFG Jazz Festival @ Milton Court***
20 NOV Cambridge - Jazz Festival @ West Rd Hall**
23 NOV Nottingham - Peggy's Skylight
24 NOV Newcastle - Glasshouse (Sage)

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** with Britten Sinfonia, Thomas Gould
*** with Britten Sinfonia, Yazz Ahmed, Thomas Gould

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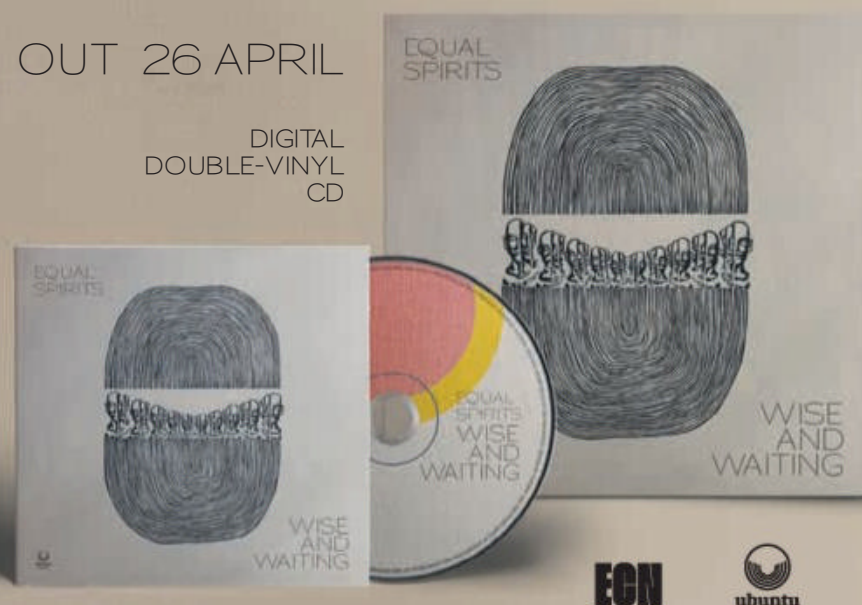

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A Rite of Spring

Ahead of this year's Cheltenham Jazz Festival, **Alyn Shipton** caught up with returning festival director **Ian George** and discovers the event's breadth and depth has produced another punchy programme

It's good to catch up with Cheltenham Jazz Festival Director Ian George, because his 21-year association with the event, from when he took on the marketing in 2003, gives him a long view. Back then, concerts were only in the Town Hall (on the main stage or the smaller Pillar Room) and at the Everyman Theatre, and a casual visitor to the town might have no idea there was a festival on. Ian's challenge was to get it better noticed.

"Yes, it's always been well regarded in the jazz world from the start," he says, "and we've always had some of the biggest names in the music, but getting people through the doors to those magical concerts wasn't easy. That had something to do with perceptions of the genre, but that's changed dramatically now, and so, of course, has where we put the events on, in a much wider range of spaces.

"What's most exciting for me about this year, is the way we can reflect different generations. We've people like corto.alto bringing their heavy-bass dub sounds, and that's quite exciting. And then we've got what we call our 'standing' club night – we've got Nubiyan Twist with the brilliant Senegalese Orchestra Baobab, so that's a double bill with two different generations but the younger one very much inspired by the other's sound. Then I'm really proud we're bringing Snarky Puppy back, which we've been waiting to do since they sold out the Town Hall in 2017!

"Those are key shows, but then bringing Lakecia Benjamin from the US is also a coup, as I think she's one of the most exciting American saxophonists at present," he continues. "But we've also always been keen to represent earlier generations of the music along with the sounds of now, so we weave in performers such as Dee Dee Bridgewater, or the Ronnie Scott's Big Band. And of course, as I said, since 2003 we've acquired a completely different choice of venues.

"We're lucky still to have the Town Hall for some events, but there's the Parabola Arts Centre, we've dinner sessions at the Hotel Du Vin (which also has the infamous late-night jam sessions) and then the tented area. You're able to represent jazz of many different periods and styles if you also think about formats and how to present the music."

I notice there's a new venue this year for concerts including dinner – namely Dunkerton's Tap Room (which specialises in cider) in Charlton Kings...

"Yes, the concerts are not unlike the ones we held in the former cinema called the Daffodil, but this is a little smaller and a bit more rustic. It's just outside Cheltenham centre, but it's got great ambience and they already do a monthly jazz session there. So we're dipping a toe in at the Tap Room – though quite a large toe in the case of Jay Rayner! But we're presenting other music there including Giacomo Smith and Lucy-Anne Daniels. As ever, we're trying a different format, with banquet tables – almost a sawdust on the floor feel – but it's a really nice venue!

"We want people to be able to experience the music in different ways. And we're lucky, because we can build a park, right in the middle of a Regency square, with various temporary venues. I think it's rather continental having Robert Plant or Gregory Porter playing there til 10 at night. Of course, in France they might keep going til the early hours, but we're not quite able to do that! But it makes us a mixture of an outdoor festival, with the free stage, the arena and the big top, and an indoor one, where at the other extreme you can relax in a nice boutique hotel just a stone's throw away."

Finally, I suggest that for hearing small group jazz with an attentive audience, it'd be hard to beat the Parabola. Ian agrees.

"It's a beautiful small theatre for those intimate performances, and we've got a great programme that Alex Carr has put together with our long-term programmer Tony Dudley-Evans. We've got the new generation coming through with people like pianist Sultan Stevenson, alongside famous names such as Norma Winstone. But it's not just small groups – we've got NYJO there in a project with Nikki Yeoh, or Sam Eastmond with John Zorn's Bagatelles. I'm very lucky to work with people like Tony and Alex whose knowledge complements mine – a festival like this is about working really well together and pooling our experience.

"And we pool experience internationally too, as we're presenting a concert there with Birmingham Conservatoire jazz students alongside their counterparts from Siena and Hamburg. We've developed this kind of partnership over the years, and I think it's really important at present to show that we're not just an isolated island [off the coast of Europe], but part of the international jazz scene as well!"

Cheltenham Jazz Festival takes place from 1 to 6 May

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Third session for the talented trio, the previous two having been unequivocal success.

Thelonous Monk: Criss Cross
Monk into unleashes endless cascades of percussive inflections and intoxicating chord progressions.

Stanley Cowell: Musa - Ancestral Streams / Solo Piano
For all the music's structural spaciousness and rhythmic freedom, not a note feels out of place, let alone excessive.

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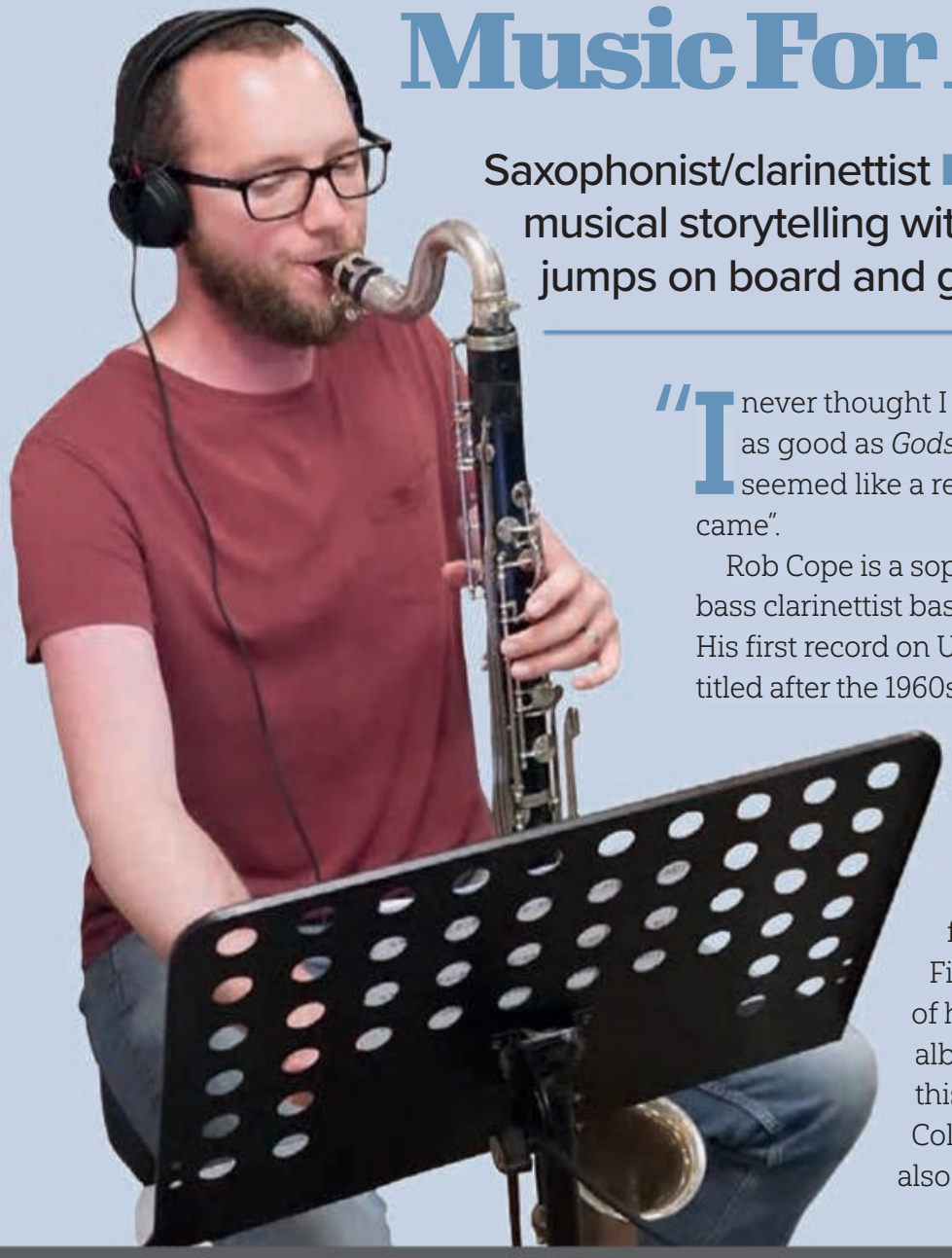


Music For Astral Travellers

Saxophonist/clarinettist **Robe Cope** is on a journey to merge traditional musical storytelling with his avant-garde influences. **Tom Spargo** jumps on board and goes along for the ride

"I never thought I could do anything as good as *Gods of Apollo*. So *Gemini* seemed like a real miracle when it came".

Rob Cope is a soprano saxophonist and bass clarinettist based near Manchester. His first record on Ubuntu Music was titled after the 1960s US Apollo space programme and featured experimental saxophone improvisation over sampled spoken audio from the NASA archives. Five years later, the title of his recently released album *Gemini* continues this association with the Cold War space race while also signalling the ancient Greek word for 'twins'. This reflects the unique format of his four-piece ensemble, which is viewed better as two coexisting duos rather than a traditional jazz quartet.

The first duo is comprised of Cope alongside tenor saxophonist Andy Scott, his former teacher who he first met aged just 10 years old. After Cope developed Hodgkin's Lymphoma at 18, Scott played a crucial role in championing and nurturing his musical talents at music college.

Scott has since remained a close mentor, and all the saxophone duets on *Gemini* were written explicitly for him. The ensemble is completed by the second duo of Liam Noble on piano and Paul Clarvis on drums, two veterans of the UK jazz scene. "This line-up is working better than I could have ever imagined" explained Cope, "I feel like I've woken a beast".

TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF...

Shared Spaces

New electronica-jazz trio, **Un.procedure**, whose line-up includes Cassie Kinoshi, are set to play this month's Cheltenham Jazz Festival. **Gail Tasker** connects the dots of their untypical creative process ahead of their newly-commissioned improv-heavy festival premiere

Un.procedure is a band born out of projects and ideas as opposed to weekly jam sessions. The trio, split between Berlin and Birmingham, comprises Piera Onacko on synths, Cassie Kinoshi on alto saxophone and electronics, and Nathan England-Wood on drums and electronics. Occasionally, an honorary fourth member is added to the mix, Belgrade-based visual artist Guri Bosh. So far, the group has released an eponymous debut EP, produced an audio-visual installation titled *Themory*, and as we speak, they are preparing a new piece for this year's Cheltenham Jazz Festival, involving an expanded line-up which includes strings and woodwind. From speaking to the band, it seems like the long-distance set-up has worked surprisingly well.

"Creatives tend to be a little bit scatterbrained," explains Piera Onacko. "So it's nice to be able to plan and fix the times when we all meet. Our visual artist, Guri Bosh, lives in Belgrade. So we often just plan these big sessions where we'll get together and work stuff out. We just put it in the diary three months in advance and then we're together for a very concentrated amount of time."

This task-based method of music-making perhaps explains Un.procedure's stylistically varied output. Their first EP, released in 2022, is a fast-paced, nu jazz voyage, led by cathartic melodies and propulsive rhythms. 'Themory', which Nathan describes as a fixed media piece, could almost be from a different band. Premiered and recorded at the 2023 Manchester Jazz Festival, it's more ambient than anything else, a fluctuating soundscape of electronic layers and site-specific field recordings, which feels simultaneously forward-facing yet nostalgic.

It's not a surprise then to learn that the band members share a wide-ranging pool of influences. Nathan and Piera initially connected over free jazz and free improvisation – Piera cites the iconic Don Cherry as an example. Cassie describes an early interest in electronic music which began in her teens, mentioning composer Max De Wardener as an example. Beyond that, it gets more eclectic. Yellow Magic Orchestra, Heiner Goebbels, and more recently, archival Ukrainian film music. Nathan also identifies German experimental rock as a strong influencer:

"There's also the German kind of 'Kozmische' bands like Can and Faust and Neu! and stuff. That was definitely an early one that we said we want to emulate, all of that in the structural parts of the songs, yeah."

"A lot of the music we make has these kinds of hypnotic, repetitive sections, it seems," Piera adds. "I think the way these songs are structured is that we have these open bits where we just kind of improvise, usually within a specific tonality, although sometimes it does go a bit off-piste."

Within this myriad of influences, improvisation is at the core of Un.procedure's creative process.

Cope originally studied contemporary classical saxophone at the Royal Northern College of Music. However, his musical trajectory changed significantly upon meeting tenor legend Chris Potter in his third year.

"That just changed my whole life. I sold my tenor and bought a 1958 Mark VI. I knew I wanted to go to London to study jazz".

Cope went on to complete a two-year jazz saxophone Masters at the Royal Academy of Music. This grounding in both jazz and classical genres gives his music a unique, multi-layered quality: "I want to write music that is suited to someone with my training, who's improvised a lot, but also read a lot."

His music walks a tightrope between heavily written and heavily improvised. "When the improvised bits happen, all the good stuff happens. And the written bit – that's just a vehicle to get there."

Cope lights up when explaining his obsession with storytelling. *Gemini*'s title track is undeniably autobiographical: "'Gemini' was a story of starting out very notated and classical. Then I used some extended techniques like multi-phonics and a soprano cadenza as a way to lead into a solo – like a mini life story. It basically ends up as a love letter to Chris Potter."

The track 'Together' similarly narrates the story of a student-teacher relationship, with two melodic lines that begin in unison, until they diverge: "I tried to explain this bittersweet parting of ways. You teach somebody everything you know, and then you let them go off into the world."

In April, Cope will be releasing a book of advanced saxophone duets containing solo transcriptions for each track on *Gemini*. He speaks openly about the profound impact that his students have on his music and recalls numerous instances in which open-minded discussions with young musicians have influenced the finished form of his compositions.

"Music is such an enormous family tree," he says. "I love this idea of the torch being passed from teacher to student, who eventually becomes the master."

Cope is an encyclopaedia of jazz influences. Key inspirations include guitarist Pat Metheny, the late trumpeter Richard Turner, minimalist composer Steve Reich, and pianist Gwilym Simcock, who was a few years above Cope at school.

"Michael Brecker was my whole life at college – I was obsessed", he says. Alongside performing and teaching, Cope now hosts *The Jazz Podcast*: "It's like weekly being snowed in with new music. But it's great because even if I don't go looking for it, music finds me, which is a wonderful thing. I'd love to be really good at tenor – that's my favourite sound" he jokes, "but what I want and what I am are two separate things".

Soprano is where Cope feels most able to express himself. He describes it as the "nexus" of the saxophone, the hardest one to master. "My soprano has quite an unusual quality to the sound – I can't make any other saxes sound like that". Cope remains a multi-instrumentalist at heart and describes taking up the bass clarinet in his early 20s as "love at first sight".

Cope hinted at the title *Mercury* for his next project, after the spaceflight programme that preceded both Apollo and Gemini. However, this may be some years in the making: "I'll have to wait until I've listened to about three years of music, until all those influences get to boiling point, until all the ideas are fully formed." Whatever form this third album takes, it will undoubtably be one to watch out for.

TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF... TAKING OFF...

"The first EP is very, very improvised," explains Nathan. "We had some outlines of stuff and a lot of it came together when we were actually recording."

"Someone might bring a phrase or a chord progression or a rhythm into the space that we then develop together," echoes Cassie as she describes the band's general approach. "A lot of it has come from improvising in the space. Or listening to synthesised textures that Piera might have made. So yeah, it's a really collaborative process."

There's an ever-growing list of contemporary jazz keyboardists, including the likes of Maria Chiara Argiró and Elliott Galvin, who have found a new creative outlet via the synthesiser, and Piera is among them.

"It really changed how I play, just purely from the kind of functionality of a synthesizer compared to a piano. It's not like you can play big voicings, or well you can with some. What I [started] doing was more focusing on lines and how to live manipulate sounds as I went, and integrate them in."

Cassie has also gone electric through using effects pedals with her saxophone, and the impact is clearly felt. In tracks like 'Polytunnel' and 'Fall and Flatten' from *Un.procedure*, her tone reverberates menacingly, packed with heavy delays and reverbs, channelling Shabaka Hutchings in The Comet is Coming, but with an 1980s sci-fi twist.

And, as Cassie notes, their music is purposefully cinematic.

"The visual side is integral I would say. For example, we're writing this new commission for Cheltenham. Guri Bosh is in the room with us, in his corner, making his visuals. And then us, we're writing the music as he's making certain visual elements, and both of these then influence each other in the space."

She adds that a future goal is to incorporate visuals into every performance, irrespective of the size of the venue. It's an ambitious vision, but one that spells out the band's multi-disciplinary approach to performance, and shows their readiness to experiment and improvise beyond the traditional confines of their instruments.

Un.procedure play Cheltenham Jazz Festival on Sunday 5 May at Parabola Arts Centre

THE REAWAKENING OF *Dee Dee*

A *'Grand Dame'* of vocal jazz, Dee Dee Bridgewater has had a four-decade career spanning music and theatre in Europe and America. Ahead of her headline Cheltenham Jazz Festival appearance, Stuart Nicholson spoke to her and discovers her civil rights spirit and musical mojo are back with a vengeance

She may be beautiful, witty and erudite; charming, gracious and elegant, but don't mess with Miss B.

She may have been presented to Presidents (the latest, Biden, in September last year) and Prime Ministers, captains of industry, of commerce and the great and good; she may be a three time Grammy Award-winning singer and a Tony Award-winning actress; a philanthropist, mentor and a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador; she may be an NEA Jazz Master, a Kennedy Center honouree, and a winner of the Maria Fisher Founder's Award from the Thelonious Monk/Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz and the recipient of Honorary Doctorates from Berklee College of Music and the University of Michigan, but *do not* mess with Miss B.

As the world catches up with Dee Dee Bridgewater's astonishing 43-year career in music and showbusiness more widely, she suddenly realised she had not recorded a new album in seven years.

"You know, I hadn't realised. I had been in mourning since my mother passed in 2017," she reflects. "I was her caregiver; the last 10 years of her life were dedicated night and day to my mother, keeping her in the best facilities possible, but I knew I had to record, but I knew I had to keep monies coming in so that I could support my mother."

With the emotional and financial toll of providing care mounting, Dee Dee needed a form of release – and found it in the music she grew up with.

In September 2016, she entered the Royal Studios in Memphis, Tennessee to record some of the great classics of Southern Soul and R&B.

"I did it because I figured it would be fun, and I was feeling depressed," she continues. "So that's the reason why I did that *Yes, I'm Ready* album, because I knew my mother was transitioning and would eventually pass, and when it happened, thank goodness I did that album, being able to channel my energies into that music, bring it to reality, to perform it, saved me."

With numbers like BB King's 'The Thrill Is Gone', and Big Mama Thornton's 'Hound Dog', leavened with a little Gospel, 'Take My Hand Precious Lord', *Yes, I'm Ready* went to No.10 in the *Billboard* Jazz Album Chart on release in September 2017. She energetically toured the album both sides of the pandemic but as she did, she gradually came face to face with herself, acknowledging that away from the bright lights, the touring and performing, she had been in denial.

> ***"Our world is becoming a very ugly place with guns running rampant in this country... and New Orleans is called the murder capital of the world right now"***

"I had been in mourning over my mother's passing," she confesses. "I had been in a creative fog, then when the pandemic happened, I was seeing all these artists creating, I had no desire to do anything."

But then it passed: "I was sitting on my sofa, and something just lifted, and I went, 'Oh!' And I have a voice, my spiritual voice, that said, 'Bill Charlap,' and I said, 'What?' And it said it again, and I have enough spiritual integrity to know when my voice speaks to me, I better follow what it says. When I haven't, things have gone quite amiss. So I called my booking agent and said, 'I am thinking of working with Bill Charlap,' and he said, 'Well that's interesting Dee Dee, I represent him too.' I went, 'Oh! Would you call him and ask him if he would like to do some duo shows?'

Photo: Kimberly M. Wang / Eardog Productions

> ***"I am not going to change my life and my spirit and walk in fear – especially after all that I went through, and was part of in the 1960s, supporting the Panthers and all of that... NO!"***

"So we started with a few dates in 2019, maybe 20 or 30 concerts, and we always got an amazing response, and I said, 'I want to record this,' so I was back in the studio, first time in a while. We went into a studio called Clear Sound in New York City, where they have a nine-foot Steinway, and went in and recorded for two days. So we have this beautiful product, and we're mastering it, and we're in negotiations with a label in the US – the reawakening of Dee Dee!"

Since then the tour diary has been filling apace, and she will be headlining the Cheltenham Jazz Festival on 4 May – sandwiched between the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and the Tashkent Jazz Festival in Uzbekistan – an engagement that brings back memories of her previous appearance there: "I will never forget when I went there the first time, in 2017 with the Memphis band after Yes *I'm Ready* had come out, I just remember going out on stage at that concert, starting up, and in the front row were four gentlemen scowling at me because I wasn't doing jazz. I remember stopping the band and saying, 'Listen, I am sorry you have been misinformed about this show, and what the music is going to be, and if you want to leave, please leave, but what I will not allow is for you to try and harass me with your posturing. So, you four gentlemen in the front with your hands clasped, you can leave now.' And they didn't leave and at the end of the show they were standing, along with everybody else! So, it will be good to come back [laughs]."

So remember, Cheltenham, don't mess with Miss B.

Born in 1950 in Memphis, Tennessee and raised in Flint, Michigan, Bridgewater's father introduced her to jazz, and while attending the University of Illinois she toured the Soviet Union in 1969 with the college jazz band. She made her name in jazz on the New York scene of the 1970s, and when she toured France with the musical *Sophisticated Ladies* in 1984, an *Affaire de Cœur* prompted a move to Paris in 1986. Then followed a highly successful career in France and Europe embracing the stage, garnering a Laurence Olivier Award nomination, performing pop and R&B before returning to jazz in 1990 and winning three Grammy Awards.

Following a divorce, Dee Dee moved back to the USA in 2010, and in 2014 she recorded *Dee Dee's Feathers* with trumpeter Irvin Mayfield and the 18-piece New Orleans Jazz Orchestra to mark the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. It hit the eleventh spot on *Billboard*'s Jazz Album Chart, the online *Allmusic Guide* noting, "The album finds Bridgewater combining her love of New Orleans' musical past with the Crescent City's vibrant present... she has built a career out of combining her love of the tradition with her desire to push the boundaries of jazz style, and *Dee Dee's Feathers* is no exception."

In 2016, Dee Dee moved to New Orleans, where she now resides on the Gulf Coast.

"I live here in New Orleans, I'm here in the South! *I'm in the South!* What the heck! How did this happen! I call it the Blue island in the Red Sea. When people say, 'Why did you move to New Orleans?' I'll say, I had made myself colourless when I am in situations with white people, because I have grown up in a predominantly white world. And the reason why I had moved here was because I wanted to have the black experience: I wanted to see myself when I get off a plane, I want to see myself when I come out of my door, I want to see myself when I went to a restaurant, or a club or to whatever kind of events I do, that's part of why I moved here."

Immersing herself in the musical life of New Orleans, she soon became a part of it, "I like being around it, even though I am not of it, I love it, I just love being here." After 30 years in the City of Light, she says she likes New Orleans' historical connection with France.

"I like the streets with French names, I live out in the Gulf community, I have always lived in gated communities since I have been back in the United States, because I am single and I have always felt that the safest place for me is a place where it is guarded so I can relax without fear of robberies or anything. Our world is becoming a very ugly place with guns running rampant in this country and New Orleans is called the murder capital of the world right now – go outside the city limits and baby, if you're black, you gotta be careful."

Racism, particularly in America's South, is something that lurks uncomfortably close to the surface. But even in the South you don't mess with Miss B.

"I have had very interesting racial experiences down here. It is interesting to observe the interaction between the black and the white here. There is a divide and I have watched the black

Photo: Tim Dickeson

people I am with be subjugated when they are in a situation where they are with white people. And these are prominent African-American people. Monied African-American people, I have seen them subjugate themselves in a situation with white people. But am I here, and what I refuse to do is subjugate myself to anyone, anyone. I don't care what colour you are. You will respect me, I have no fear." So don't mess with Miss B.

While acknowledging her celebrity, even she speaks of experiencing what has come to be known as 'Everyday Racism', both conscious and unconscious, that is as insidious as it is commonplace: "I tend to walk some imaginary line of acceptance, not only because I am from the north but because I am a celebrity who lived in France and speaks a foreign language and has been at the table of Presidents and Prime Ministers and all of that stuff, so I have another kind of acceptance here."

Even so, she says, "I have gone to dinners with friends of mine where they have invited other white friends of theirs who refuse to shake my hand. Refuse to acknowledge me and want to talk about my dog! I take my dog with me everywhere because she is an emotional support dog, and she is the rest of me. *But they will have a conversation with my dog* before they will speak to me! And yes, I have also had some experiences where I felt I had to respond to these racist MFs – 'I am a black bitch from the North, I am not a Southern negro, and I will cut you every which but loose, so get out of my fucking way!' It always takes them aback. Racism? Just treble it here."

There are also unspoken conventions, she says, "Since I have moved down here I DO NOT travel at night if I can help it. I remember during the pandemic I wanted to drive to the southernmost tip of Louisiana, and my daughter (China Moses), who was living in London, had come over, and they shut down England! So she stayed with me for three months, and we would take these drives.

"But I hadn't calculated how far the southernmost tip was. So we get down there and started to come back and it began to get dark, and then it was dark, and we were going through these no-go areas. I was fearful, and I was alert, I am very aware, and they still have what they call 'Sundown Cities' where black people have to be indoors after dark, in their neighbourhood. It is an unspoken thing where black people could not be in white neighbourhoods or they could be killed. It's the underbelly of the United States, it's a sick place and Trump has played into this – he has allowed people with racist ideas and attitudes to have a party. He has emboldened people. I was on the freeway one day while he was still president, and there was a white guy in a pickup truck who got behind me and I am going like 70 miles per hour, and he started to bump my car from the rear. I had to manoeuvre to the side of the road so this crazy motherfucker would not run me off the road – and thank goodness I am a good driver, I passed a driving test in Paris, France right next to these crazy French drivers, so I know how to manoeuvre. It's real, it's real.

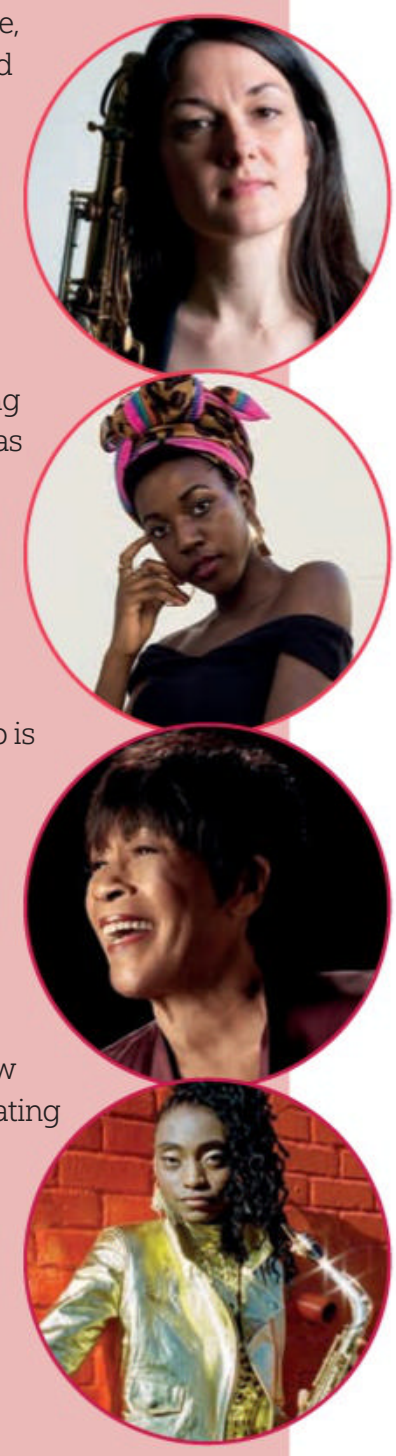
"So I am always on guard when I go out, I am always aware, but I love this city! I can't think of another city that I could be in. My eldest daughter lives in Los Angeles and she and my son-in-law, they want me to move to LA, they are ready to build a wing onto their home so I can live with them. I ain't ready for that shit! I'm still an individual, I have my life to live and I want to live it my way! And they are like, 'We're worried about you being on your own,' and I said, 'Listen, I am a grown woman and if I am meant to die down here, and die at the hands of some crazy motherfucker, so be it.' I am not going to change my life and my spirit and walk in fear – especially after all that I went through, and was part of in the 1960s, supporting the Panthers and all of that, NO!"

CHELTENHAM'S FEMALE FRONTLINE

In 2019, under the Keychange programme, Dr Sarah Raine reported on "ways forward for equal gender representation at jazz festivals," because in previous years Cheltenham (in common with other UK festivals) had not achieved a 50/50 representation. This year's event, with headliners **Dee Dee Bridgewater** and **Lakecia Benjamin**, as well as some of the great names of the UK scene including **Norma Winstone** and **Elaine Delmar**, has clearly taken that message on board.

Director Ian George says: "In this and the other Cheltenham Festivals, including Literature and Science, it's become baked into our thinking".

So, leading off the programme on 1 May with **Dionne Warwick** in the Big Top is a strong signal of how far the festival has come. As well as Dionne's fellow soul legend **Bettye LaVette**, keep an eye out for **Gabriella Liandu**, a fine jazz vocalist who doubles as an opera singer and choir conductor; the soul-tinged voice of **Alice Russell**, and (following her special set for BBC Radio 3's new show *Round Midnight*), **Zara McFarlane** celebrating Sarah Vaughan's centenary. Alongside Cheltenham vocal favourites **Clare Teal** and **Liane Carroll**, there are fine female instrumentalists too, from saxophonist **Trish Clowes** to guitarist **Ruta Di**. A key change indeed! **Alyn Shipton**



Pictured from top: Trish Clowes, Gabriella Liandu, Bettye LaVette and Lakecia Benjamin

Turning her attention to jazz today, she observes: "The music seems to be all over the place, an extension of what is going on in the world. A number of younger musicians are blending their music with other musical forms, I look to the trumpet player who I mentored, Theo Crocker, who now has a wonderful career, who hitherto was into hip hop and electronica, all these other musics that he is blending into his music, or I look at a Robert Glasper who is now being nominated for Grammys *[and winning them – Ed]* in the R&B contemporary music arena, as well as jazz.

"Our legends are dying, we lost Chick, we lost Wayne, Herbie is 84, the legends are of a certain age, and you see music in general is turning into other things. It's difficult to categorise where the music is heading, I think that's in all genres – look, we've got the Country and Western arena that has had to open up to African-American artists because Country and Western is based on the blues, so we've got all this stuff going on and I'm excited that I am alive to witness it, and even be a small part of it! When I come on the stage at Cheltenham they're going to see Dee Dee Bridgewater with an American pianist and two Italian musicians.

"When America is one of the stronger jazz countries, that makes quite a statement!"

Dee Dee Bridgewater plays the Town Hall on Saturday 4 May at Cheltenham Jazz Festival

"You have to keep the audience engaged"

Once a rising star, now an elder statesman, saxophonist/multi-instrumentalist **Courtney Pine** turns 60 this year. Far from resting on his laurels, he's out touring again with a headline show at Cheltenham Jazz Festival, and his playing is hitting new highs. **Ammar Kalia** caught up with the saxophonist to look back at his extraordinary career and discovers his thirst for musical and spiritual knowledge remains undimmed

It has been over four decades since saxophonist Courtney Pine first emerged onto the British jazz scene and his motto has remained the same: "The limit of jazz is the limit of your imagination. If you imagine far enough, there is no limitation at all."

In 2024 Pine celebrates his 60th birthday, and 38 years since the release of his debut album as a bandleader, *Journey to the Urge Within*. Back in 1986, *Journey* was a watershed moment for the UK's improvised music scene, opening the door for other black artists who had previously faced severe obstacles in the British jazz world to find a wider audience. Pine has since gone on to release over a dozen records as a leader, as well as produce for the likes of quartet Empirical and violinist Omar Puente; and form his own record label, Destin-E. He has been nominated for the Mercury Music Prize, won Best Jazz Act at the MOBOs and in 2009 he was given a CBE for his services to jazz music.

> ***"This is music that you're a part of, which is the vibe of the Caribbean"***

Acclaimed and garlanded as he is, Pine isn't resting on his laurels. Speaking over a video call from the book-lined living room of his London home, it's clear that his appetite for imagination is just as strong as ever.

"I don't see myself as an elder yet," he says with a laugh. "I started relatively young, so I've always wanted to know what I would sound like at 40, 50 or 60. What would I be practising? What would I be listening to? What would I be trying to achieve?"

To answer some of those questions in brief, Pine is currently reading a biography of Cannonball Adderley, practising as many new scales and rhythms as he can get his fingers around, and thinking about the spiritual connections of Yoruban and Brazilian music.

"I fuel my imagination through research and my research is continuous," he says. "It's all about being in the music and learning as much as possible. Some artists just want to limit themselves to 1959 and hard bop – and there's nothing wrong with that, but from Sidney Bechet up to Albert Ayler and beyond, it's all fascinating to me."

Nowhere is this gargantuan appetite for knowledge and inspiration more apparent than in Pine's own discography. Over the years he has released records that test the boundaries of improvisation, varying wildly from 1990's reggae fusion record *Closer to Home*, produced by Jamaican stalwart Gussie Clarke, to 1991's straight ahead album *Within the Realm of Our Dreams*, featuring Jeff 'Tain' Watts on drums, Kenny Kirkland on piano and the late Charnett Moffett on bass; and the hip-hop influenced, turntable scratching of 1997's *Underground*. More recently, 2009's *House of Legends* project saw Pine paying tribute to formative Caribbean artists

Photo: Alexis Maryon

> ***"I was told that 'people like me' didn't go to universities, so I had to find my own ways to learn"***

such as multi-reedist Bertie King, singer Lesley Hutchinson and saxophonist Joe Harriott through 11 tracks that combined everything from swing to calypso, *mento* and reggae.

"I felt I was being courageous because it wasn't a record that was around at the time. I didn't think anybody would like it," he says. "But audiences proved me wrong and to this day I get calls from all over the world to play it. I really enjoy how audiences listen to it and then understand that this isn't music that you have to revere. This is music that you're a part of, which is the vibe of the Caribbean."

Pine will be performing his House of Legends show at this year's Cheltenham Festival, bringing this infectious, participatory music to the event's discerning crowd. It will also be a full circle moment, since Cheltenham was one of the first festivals he played outside of London when he started out in the 1980s.

"It's special being back, and I love playing in those spaces where you can project from a different perspective," he says. "They have always welcomed me in Cheltenham, even though I sometimes brought a punk rock vibe when I maybe should have been more refined!"

That punk rock, no-holds-barred ethos wasn't just an early experimentation for Pine. In fact, it is a governing attitude that has remained with him throughout his career – one that was initially forged in direct response to the prejudice he encountered when first attempting to gig in London.

Growing up in North London to Jamaican parents, Pine first became interested in playing the saxophone after chancing upon a televised performance by Grover Washington Jr when he was 14. "He was performing Billy Joel's 'Just The Way You Are' and there was something in the way he played live that you just can't fake," Pine says with a smile. "I sat down next to my father, who is a carpenter, and I told him, 'that's what I want to do for the rest of my life.' He just laughed because in Caribbean tradition you get a trade, and music is not a trade."

Yet Pine persisted, spending the next three years trying to convince his school's music teacher to let him learn the instrument.

"Nobody was playing the clarinet, so I had to start there until eventually we went on a music trip to another school and the saxophone player didn't turn up," he says. "I snuck into the band room, put the saxophone together and just started playing. My classmates walked in, saw me on the instrument and I was a saxophone player from then on."

Teachers still remained resistant to his musical development though, with some even expressing outright racism at the prospect of Pine continuing his education.

"I was told that 'people like me' didn't go to universities, so I had to find my own ways to learn," he says, shaking his head in disbelief all these years later. "That forced me to come from an 'underground' perspective, to fight the power and try to succeed against all odds."

Beginning to venture to jazz jams throughout London in the 1980s, Pine often found himself the only black person in the room. "It was an act of defiance to walk into a space where you're not welcome. You felt that you're not supposed to be playing this music," he says. "I would have my toes stepped on or have to sit in the corner of the room. The white musicians that were around would have the attitude that I wasn't good enough."

Refusing to give up, Pine began finding solidarity with other young black musicians who were facing the same struggles. Rather than be cowed into submission, they channelled that sense of defiance into the very music they were playing, broadening its scope well beyond the confines of the jazz music they experienced at the time.

"When we got up to start performing in the jam sessions, the lights would go on and that was the end of it," Pine says. "But we continued because it is our cultural music. Whether it was calypso, reggae or jazz, we were playing music to the people, for the people. In the clubs, meanwhile, it seemed almost the opposite, like this was just music for specialists."

Continuing this self-driven path through the music of the black diaspora, Pine varied his playing even further after being introduced to a number of reggae bands by his older sister's boyfriend, who worked as a soundsystem engineer. Hired as a session player, Pine spent much of the 1980s gigging regularly for dub and reggae groups, as well as for successful Brit-Funk group Hi-Tension, ultimately honing his philosophy of live performance.

"Whatever you do, you have to keep the audience engaged," he says. "It all comes from the American history of this music – if the audience wasn't dancing, they would find a new band

Photos: Alexis Maryon (this page), Tatiana Gorilovsky (opposite)

that would get them going. It's that cutthroat and that is why so many of the American players are so strong."

With his renown building, Pine co-founded the Jazz Warriors, a collective of black British musicians aiming to take ownership of their music in the country's improvised scene. He also found himself invited to the States and welcomed there to a degree that he had never encountered at home before. Travelling across the Atlantic, he sat in with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, as well as developing an enduring relationship with the Marsalis family. On his return, a bidding war began with British labels suddenly wanting to snap him up as a much-hyped new jazz talent.

> ***"I've always wanted to know what I would sound like at 40, 50 or 60. What would I be practising? What would I be listening to? What would I be trying to achieve?"***

"I had 10 record deals and they all wanted me to be Kenny G," he laughs. "They offered me Kenny G's producer or his bass player, but that wasn't what I wanted to do at all. At that time, there really hadn't been any artists that had been given the opportunity to be promoted as a pop artist playing jazz. It was uncharted territory."

Indeed, Pine signed to Island Records, became the first contemporary jazz act on the cover of *NME*, the first winner of the Best Jazz Act award at the inaugural MOBOs and was hailed as the "saviour of jazz". As a sideman, he was also called up to play with the likes of The Pet Shop Boys and Kate Bush. It was a heady buzz that has ultimately served to make Pine an invaluable mentor to the new generation of musicians trying to make it in the industry today.

"We've had an amazing expansion of jazz in this country and it's evolved in a really nice way," he says. "I'm so excited to see younger players like Xhosa Cole or Deschanel Gordon finding their own voice and sounding like where they come from. In my day, we barely even had jazz degrees and now youngsters are being educated and taking their space. It's confirmation of the mission."

Pine's fellow Jazz Warrior Gary Crosby has played a key part in educating the next generations of players through his grassroots Tomorrow's Warriors programme, producing talents like 2023 Mercury Music Prize winners Ezra Collective. Pine is equally keen to pass the torch through inviting younger players like Gordon into his band, as well as promoting new acts on his label.

"Record companies don't always see the talent that's under their noses, so there's guys like me who go to the jam sessions, who play all the festivals and spend money on younger artists to give them the opportunity to present their work," he says. "The Americans nurture talent in that way and we have a lot of talent here that should be presented too."

He might have emerged from the underground to battle prejudices throughout his career but it seems that, entering his seventh decade, Pine is finally witnessing jazz entering the mainstream. Yet, his work is far from over.

"I began as an outsider and I still have a bucket list of recordings to tick off," he says. "The inspiration never ends and I'm not setting any boundaries. I'm still up for it, always!"

Courtney Pine headlines the Town Hall at Cheltenham Jazz Festival on Sunday 5 May

The Perfect Partnership

A generation-spanning hookup between revered jazz vocalist, **Norma Winstone**, and her prodigiously gifted musical partner, pianist **Kit Downes**, are set to unite for a debut Cheltenham collaboration, which will also be released as a new album, *Outpost of Dreams,* on ECM in July. **Alyn Shipton** spoke to the dynamic duo

"I feel like new projects and ideas spring up when I'm not overly self-aware of the direction I'm going in, and open to new suggestions" *– Kit Downes*

One of the events at this year's Cheltenham Jazz Festival that's already quite a talking point is the duo concert featuring pianist Kit Downes and singer Norma Winstone. Having had the chance to hear them live in a short trio concert with Iain Ballamy, as part of the ECM 50th Anniversary celebration at the Royal Academy of Music in January 2020, just before the first lockdown, I know there's a natural synergy between them.

So my first question when I speak to them both for *Jazzwise*, is whether they'd worked together before that?

"Well actually not much," says Norma. "A while before that concert, I just happened to have a gig at the Pheasantry, which Nikki Iles was supposed to be doing, but at the last minute she couldn't do it. So I wondered, 'Who shall I get?' At that point I'd never worked with Kit, so I thought I'd ask him. It was all very last minute, no proper rehearsal, but it just worked, it was wonderful."

Kit agrees, but he looks back a bit further: "I had heard Norma a lot with Kenny Wheeler and John Taylor, in the trio Azimuth. I actually first met her in Canada when I was 20! She came to a big band concert and said hello. She was so friendly and supportive to all of us then, and that really stuck with me. Playing with her for the first time at the Pheasantry was amazing. She is so up for exploring musically, and always looking for the less well trodden path! And her ears are so amazing that I felt I could do anything I wanted."

The feeling was obviously mutual, as Norma adds: "I thought it'd be great to work with him again. But we've actually only seen each other a few times since that gig, until we did a little run of concerts earlier this year in Germany and Austria. But we did meet up in April last year to record an album for ECM.

"Kit had been doing some recordings in different formats for the label, and I think he said he'd like to do a duo with me. That actually came about after we'd done a recording and streaming project as a trio with Tim Garland, from his studio, followed by a lunchtime concert from the Pizza Express. We managed to fit that one in between lockdowns, and we also did a few gigs in Scotland and the Lake District with guitarist Mike Walker, as a kind of experiment."

"Some of the repertoire we'll be doing at Cheltenham came from that period," comments Kit, "but some of it was composed a bit later. I wrote some pieces that I sent to Norma for her to write lyrics. The tune 'El' I wrote just before my daughter was born, and Norma wrote these beautiful lyrics about her and about the beauties of a new baby in the world - it was so lovely!"

Norma takes up the story: "It was after the Tim Garland trios when Kit first said he'd really like to record in duo. I'd been discussing with Manfred Eicher the idea of doing an album of Steve Swallow songs, and as I said, Kit had been doing a range of things for ECM, including his organ solos, the trio Enemy, and the duo with Seb Rochford. And so, somehow or other, we managed to make my project and Kit's idea of a duo to happen at the same time, so I went over to northern Italy, to Stefano Amerio's Arte Suono studio in Udine, to do two days of recording with Kit and then a further three days doing the Swallow project. I gather the album with Kit is now mixed, and it'll come out later this year.

"I'd recorded there before, with pianist Glauco Venier and saxophonist Klaus Gesing, and Glauco (who lives nearby) joined me again for the Steve Swallow project. So I was working on successive days with two very different, but sympathetic musicians.

"One difference is that, overall, Glauco doesn't even want to solo much, he likes being a part of something, a third voice in the trio for instance, although I have sometimes worked in duo with him, too.

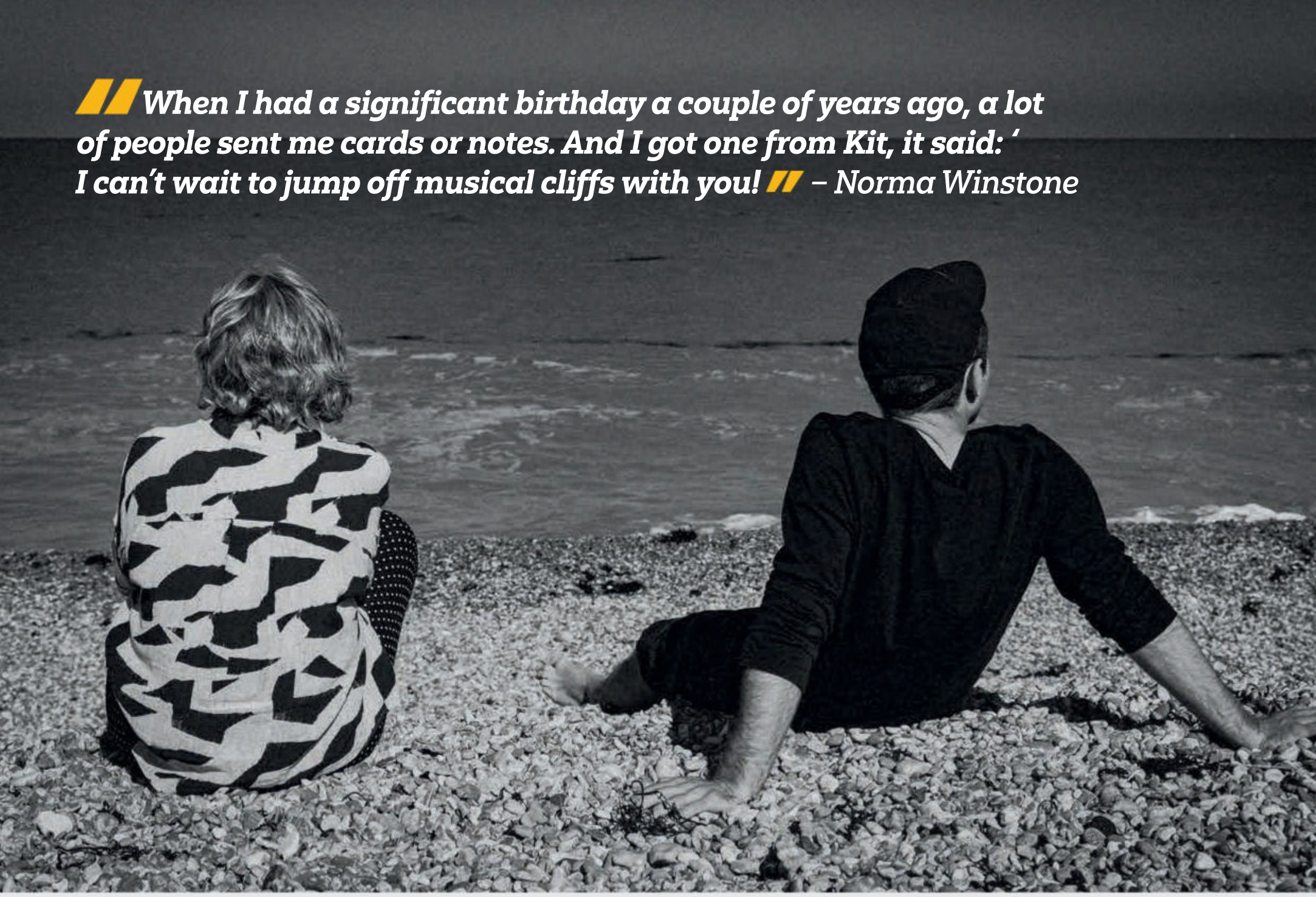
"Picking up on what Kit says, the repertoire for the record became the basis of the live concerts we're doing now, so we'll be bringing a lot of the pieces to Cheltenham, as we did for the German and Austrian shows back in January."

She continues: "I brought in material for the recording. One thing was a Ralph Towner song, 'Beneath an Evening Sky', which was written with so many bars in six, and then some bars in five, and then back to six. But when I gave it to Kit, he didn't play it like that at all. He played with a very loose time feel, and said, 'This is the Ligeti version!'

"I also brought in the Carla Bley tune, 'Jesus Maria', which is a very odd piece, but I really love it. It's quite difficult to sing, but I like a challenge! There's a kind of a Swedish folk song, another one that I brought to the table. And then we do a piece by John Taylor, an older piece to which I wrote words after he died, called 'Fly The Wind'. I think Kit was reluctant to do too many of John's tunes, saying he didn't want to sound like a 'bad copy'! Though he never would because he always sounds like Kit!

"There's a lot of Kit's material as well, in fact just about all the rest of the pieces we do. He wrote one that's quite long, called 'Nocturne', and he just said, 'I think you

Photos: Nick Smart



When I had a significant birthday a couple of years ago, a lot of people sent me cards or notes. And I got one from Kit, it said: ' I can't wait to jump off musical cliffs with you! – *Norma Winstone*

can sing here, and maybe there, and there, and I'll just play in between.' I came up with some words for that, and I'm really pleased with them. But all the pieces are very different every time, because he's such an improviser, and I love that. I think I normally work best by letting the other musician or musicians I'm working with do what they want to do, and I find ways of fitting with them. I feel inspired by that. And that's not limited to working with Kit, or with Klaus and Glauco."

Picking up on Norma's comments about the sequence of albums that Kit's made for ECM, I wondered if he had mapped out a plan for these projects?

"I try not to think of those things too much," he answers. "All of the records I made with ECM – and with other labels – are all just points on a map, I guess. They're charting a course of what is hopefully some kind of musical development! I feel like new projects and ideas spring up when I'm not overly self-aware of the direction I'm going in, and open to new suggestions.'

Thinking about repertoire, I wonder about tackling standards. For example, I remember hearing Norma taking on a song I'd never heard her do, when she did 'Stars Fell on Alabama' at Jeremy Robson's Jazz and Poetry reunion in Oxford a couple of years ago.

"Yes, well I don't think I'd done it before! Jeremy had a poem that related to the lyrics to that song, and so we did it, but working alongside old colleagues such as Dave Green and Art Themen, with whom I've worked for years, we all fitted in and were able to find something new to say. And of course, that's true of many long-term colleagues. I've also worked for a long time with Nikki Iles, including with the Printmakers. She and I are off to Turin before Cheltenham, with Mark Lockheart, where we'll be doing a workshop as well as a trio concert, playing as I did with Klaus and Glauco, or with Tim and Kit, with no bass and drums. And then later in the summer, in July, Nikki and I will be at Swanage. But with all that going on, I'm really looking forward to joining Kit again in Cheltenham and exploring the repertoire we worked on together. It is something different at heart, I think, but basically, I sing and he plays!"

"Kit also plays a lot with folk people, including the Scottish violinist Aidan O'Rourke," Norma continues. "I hadn't heard them live but a few years ago, one Sunday morning I was actually having a cup of tea and listening to the *Breakfast Show* on Radio 3, when they have their Sounds of the Earth feature. After some birdsong, the next part of the mix was this track with harmonium and violin.

"It was just before I did the gigs with Mike Walker and Kit, and the tune caught my ear. I thought it'd be a great piece to play with the two of them. At the end of the radio feature, they tell you what you've been listening to and you can imagine my surprise when they said it was 'Every Morning She Steps Out the Back Door' by Aidan O'Rourke and Kit Downes! I thought how extraordinary it was, that I'd just heard it and immediately thought of Kit! While I was listening, I had no reason to know that he was involved in it, but we've taken that song as well, to be one which we do on our duo concerts, and I've written words to the tune. But initially it was the sound of him playing the harmonium that drew me to it. And I think it exemplifies something about the musicians I love the most, which is that you never quite know what's going to happen. When I had a significant birthday a couple of years or so ago, a lot of people sent me cards or notes. And I got one from Kit, it said: 'I can't wait to jump off musical cliffs with you!'"

And what is Kit most looking forward to about the upcoming concert?

"Easy," he answers. "Playing with Norma!"

Norma Winstone and Kit Downes play the Parabola Arts Centre at Cheltenham Jazz Festival on Saturday 4 May

TURNING POINT

“The first time I heard it, I didn’t get it; but listened to it 10 more times, and it became my favourite record for a decade”

Snarky Puppy bassist and bandleader **Michael League** tells **Brian Glasser** how alt-pop group XTC’s album *Apple Venus Volume 1* changed his musical life

This was the first XTC record I ever heard, although it was one of their later ones. Growing up, I always loved pop; but that record opened my eyes to the sonic potential of popular music. From then on, it was one of the things I was most interested in, which is why I like artists like Björk and Radiohead – texturally, there’s so much richness; and you can apply that to any genre. It can live in any zone.

I heard it through my brother, who’s five years older than me, and also a musician. He was my music ‘dealer’ when I was a kid, making sure I wasn’t only listening to Spin Doctors and Nirvana. I must have been 13 or 14 – a formative time!

The record is really beautiful because there’s some keyboards and stuff, some bass, but it’s pretty much all acoustic. Plus, the arrangements are great; so it was also the moment when I fell in love with arranging. Even when I’m in a duo or trio, the arrangement is so, so important to me. The compositions are wonderful, too – so it had everything!

I grew up in the 1990s in the suburbs so I liked alternative rock. It was similar enough to that – you know, guitar, drums, bass, vocal harmonies – to be accessible; but it was different enough so that it blew my mind and made me curious to understand what was going on. I was confused, above all by the harmony.

The chords on that record are really crazy; and when they’re not crazy, the arrangements put the chord in a really different space. There’s so much colour in the arrangements. The first time I heard it, I didn’t get it; but I knew there was something in there that I needed to check out. So I listened to it ten more times, and it became my favourite record for a decade!

I think in the 1990s it was easier to stick with things. You bought a CD, and if you didn’t like it, you listened until you did! $19.99 was a lot of money. Now that buys you two months of Spotify and you get the whole history of recorded music. So if you don’t like it in the first 10 seconds, why would you keep listening to it? Personally, I think that sucks. Human beings having too much at their disposal is not always a positive thing. It’s good to not have too many options, and to try to get the most out of what you have. I think all of my favourite records, the first time I heard them, I wasn’t in love with them. If you love something the first time you hear it, it’s a sign that what you’re listening to is too familiar to you. Obviously, I don’t want to be challenged every time I listen to music, I just want to put something on and have a good time or dance or whatever - Art can be cathartic, therapeutic, fun. But it can also be instructive, and eye-opening.

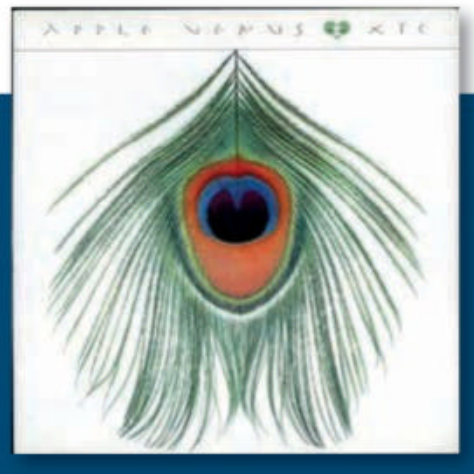
I never sat down and learned the songs – my ear wasn’t at the level where I could hear extended harmony, or even differentiate what the guitar was doing. But on ‘I’d Like That’, the harmony’s pretty straight-forward; so I learned to play that one, it was super-fun.

I still use things I got from that record. I’m going to be arranging strings for a fado singer, and I’ll be using my knowledge of arranging and my sense of what I love about strings. This record plays as big a role in forming that sense of taste and creativity as any other record that I can think of that has an orchestra on it.

Music is cumulative. There’s nothing that we hear that we can un-hear. Gigs that we love shape us for the rest of our lives - as do gigs we hate. It all goes into the hard drive. That’s why I never really like talking about genres. Anything that happens in jazz happens in another way in another form of music. I don’t think that any genre is especially special. It’s all concepts and accents and vocabulary, dialects.

I had the CD when I was a kid, but I don’t now - I don’t have anything to play the CD with! I don’t think it’s on streaming platforms, but I’d love to listen to it again and see what I make of it...

Michael League and Snarky Puppy play Cheltenham Jazz Festival on 5 May



XTC
Apple Venus Volume 1
Idea/Cooking Vinyl (1999)
PERSONNEL: Colin Moulding (v, b); Andy Partridge (v, g, ky); Dave Gregory (p, ky, g, v); additional musicians.
TRACKS: ‘River Of Orchids’, ‘I’d Like That’, ‘Easter Theatre’, ‘Knights In Shining Karma’, ‘Frivolous Tonight’, ‘Greenman’, ‘Your Dictionary’, ‘Fruit Nut’, ‘I Can’t Own Her’, ‘Harvest Festival’, ‘The Last Balloon’.

AFTER HOURS IN SOHO WITH BASIE, BILLIE AND THE BOPPERS...

Hot jazz, dancing girls and a piratical Jamaican... **Val Wilmer** celebrates **Len Callender** and his club the Buccaneer, another forgotten 1950s Soho den of iniquity. Photos and archive clippings from the Val Wilmer collection

Jazz has always been associated with funky dancehalls, seedy bars and the sex trade. This is hardly surprising, given its origins in impoverished communities, although the connection with brothels, glorified by the early chroniclers, is now regarded as exaggerated. Only Jelly Roll Morton and the other 'piano professors' entertained at the New Orleans 'sporting houses', bands did not.

Nightclubs, however, have always had a connection with organised crime. Louis Armstrong worked routinely for gangsters during Prohibition, but musicians have often had to take whatever they could get. Indeed, it was often only on the fringes of society that there was a chance to jam.

When it comes to postwar London, I've already written about two Soho strip clubs where this was the case. The Panama in Great Windmill street (*Jazzwise* 201, October 2015), hosted some degree of experimentation; although the Venus Room in Old Compton Street (*Jazzwise* 265, August 2021) provided the classic after-hours setting.

Now I give you the Spider's Web, part of the Buccaneer. Or was it the Spider's Den? Known by both names, presumably in an attempt to stay ahead of the licensing laws, this 1950s Soho cellar just off Wardour Street was the creation of Jamaican Len Callender.

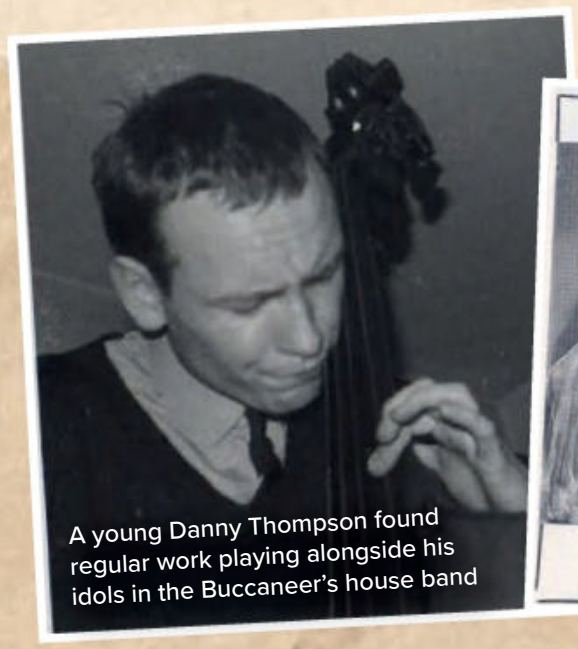
Living in London by the late 1930s, Callender went back to Kingston following the war, to return in 1948 on the m/v Empire Windrush. He took inspiration from the energy of the new wave of migrants, and, following the example of other Caribbean entrepreneurs such as Gus Leslie (*Jazzwise* 276, August 2022), went into the nightclub game.

Callender was a conservative individual, obsessed with good tailoring. He favoured Prince of Wales checks at first, but was wearing pin-striped suits by the early 1950s, when he and wife Gwen opened the Colonnade club at number 6 Meard Street, next door to the Mandrake. Unlike Gus Leslie at the Sunset, Callender neither sought nor attracted a black clientele. With few exceptions, his customers were white, everyday workers who liked a drink and a gamble, and showbusiness figures in addition to the usual criminals, hookers and spivs. A swinging house trio, led by drummer Vic Richards, encouraged jazz musicians to sit in.

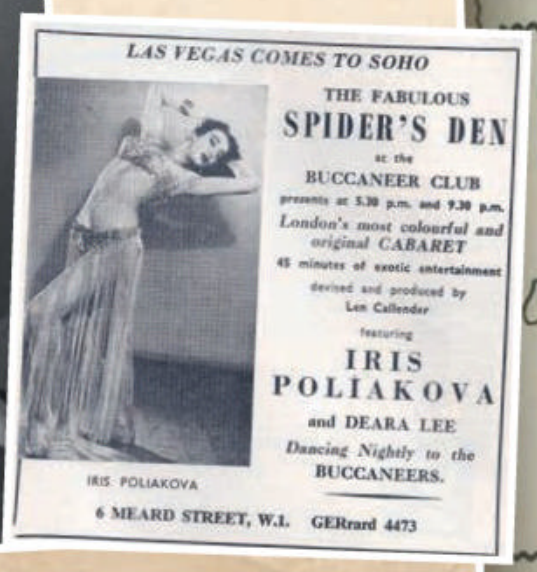
Punters liked Callender, but running a Soho club was no easy matter. Licensing requirements were rigorous and there was constant pressure for 'subs' from both corrupt police and organised crime. Eventually, the Colonnade morphed into the Buccaneer, a drinking club with a piratical motif and one of the first in Soho to offer what was described as a 'proper theatrical cabaret', a euphemism for a 'glamour' show that stopped just short of striptease.

With a new jazz quartet and social visits to the bar from Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan and Billie Holiday, the club retained a progressive image, but it was not long before the cabaret room became "the fabulous Spider's Den", with its stage productions moving into more daring territory. Visitors were invited on board by Captain Len Callender "whose steady hand on the wheel has kept the old ship sailing along for a long time now", although 'Las Vegas Comes to Soho', presented in 1959, was clearly a little more revealing. Otherwise, music and dancing continued in the Espresso Coffee Lounge until 4am, attracting a floating population of passing instrumentalists.

Among those that Callender actually hired were two veterans of British bebop. Drummer Cecil 'Flash' Winston doubled as an entertainer, while trumpeter Derry Gascoigne was a one-off, an early associate of Ronnie Scott and Don Rendell. Both saxophonists have acknowledged Gascoigne's originality, despite an unorthodox approach to his instrument, but while jazz musicians appreciated his adventurousness, Mine Host



A young Danny Thompson found regular work playing alongside his idols in the Buccaneer's house band



was unimpressed. Callender enjoyed singing the occasional ballad with the band himself, but he did not want creativity, he wanted the punters' money. He sacked Gascoigne after only a week, citing the singular crime against jazz of being "too loud".

The resident Buccaneers continued to attract quality jamsters to Meard Street, as well as a teenage double bassist named Danny Thompson. He was playing skiffle in Soho when he went to Archer Street, the musicians' unofficial labour exchange, hoping to spot his idols, jazzmen such as Tubby Hayes and Phil Seamen. There he learnt of a vacancy at the Spider's Web, although as a "good Catholic boy", he was hesitant about applying to work in a strip-club. His inhibitions disappeared when he heard that top jazz players congregated there after 'the girls' finished at 1am. He joined the house trio, beginning an unparalleled education.

With £13 a week in his pocket, Thompson played every night with individuals of the category of Hayes and Ronnie Scott, Tony Crombie and Phil Seamen. Others included trombonist Ken Wray and legendary drummers Dickie De Vere and Bobby Schwartz. Each brought a different experience to the table.

"It was fantastic," Thompson recalled. "I was only 16. Tubby used to say 'the notes you're playing hurt my *eyes* but you got great time!'"

That was all the encouragement the youngster needed. He went on to become one of the most-recorded double bassists in British music, making sessions with Tubby Hayes, Chris McGregor, Stan Tracey and Cliff Richard, not to mention John Martyn, Pentangle, Kate Bush, SE Rogie and Davey Graham.

To Thompson, the club was "a step above the average Soho dive", well-run and with no hint of friction. He knew there was illegal gambling after-hours, but never witnessed any outside pressure, either from protection mobs or from the law.

The calm, however, was deceptive. Callender had a poor relationship with the police and was merely enjoying a brief period of respite from their attentions. It would not be long before he was in trouble again.

The club closed around 1960, leaving Soho jazzers without one of their favourite 'sit-in' joints. Speaking to the *Melody Maker* in 1961, saxophonist Bobby Wellins bewailed the demise of such venues, "all-night places in London like The Pad and the Buccaneer, where you could play at all hours and with different musicians".

All this took place at a time of significant cultural interchange. One of the most visible newcomers I recall from that period was the Sri Lankan pianist Stuart Da Silva. I saw him playing solo at the Downbeat and with his Horace Silver-styled trio at the Flamingo, but it was at the Buccaneer that he won his spurs.

Guitarist Ernie Cranenburgh was another. Hired by Callender in 1957, shortly after arriving from Calcutta, he went on to jam with Joe Harriott at the Nucleus, spent years with Ray Ellington, and still remains active and respected at 87. The racial profile of the musicians' community was changing, with mavericks like Len Callender playing their part.

Thanks to Paul Burnett-Kirk, Lenval A Callender Jr, Earl Cameron, Derry Gascoigne, Vic, Stella and Barny Richards, Danny Thompson and Bobby Wellins.

Len Callender: Nightclub and Buccaneer proprieter in an early Tottenham Court Road portrait

Albums: New Releases

The UK's most definitive review section – Jazz and beyond

★★★★★ Landmark Recording ★★★★ Excellent ★★★ Good ★★ Average ★ Disappointing

Cyrille Aimée
À Fleur de Peau

Whirlwind Recordings WR4820 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★

Cyrille Aimée (v, g, uke) plus various personnel including Jake Sherman (p, ky) and Abe Rounds (d, perc). Rec. 2018-2023

Although she's been composing for years, the French singer-songwriter Cyrille Aimée refers to her latest album *À Fleur de Peau* as being her "real birth as a songwriter".

Teaming up with New York multi-instrumentalist and producer, Jake Sherman, the album's soulful melodies, heartfelt lyrics and ear-catching arrangements take flight with a rare blend of sincerity and allure.

From the warm embrace of 'Beautiful Way', a bilingual love letter to her adopted home of New Orleans, to the tender introspection of 'Back to You,' dripping with nu-soul vibes and poignant nostalgia, each track is a window into Aimée's musical universe. And it's not just about her originals, with Aimée effortlessly breathing new life into timeless classics like The Isley Brothers' 'For the Love of You' and the enchanting *chanson*, 'Ma Préférence'. In 'Feel What I Feel,' a tender waltz-ballad, Aimée's voice dances above a tapestry of delicately plucked guitar, tinkling glockenspiel and dreamy strings, evoking a sense of pure emotion. And then there's the infectious positivity of 'Here', adorned with a children's choir, which invites us to bask in the beauty of the present moment. The mesmerising simplicity of 'Historia De Amor', a Spanish-language serenade celebrating the beauty of nature, brings this consummate collection to a close.

Peter Quinn

Jacob Anderskov
I Sang

April Records APL123CD (CD, DL) ★★★

Jacob Anderskov (p), Kasper Tranberg (t), Jacob Munck (tba, tb, v) Jacob Høyer (d) and Soffie Viemose (v). Rec. 12-16 September 2022

The basic conception of this album is good, and perhaps better understood by those who have visited Denmark and experienced *Højskolesangbogen*, the singalong songs that date back to 19th century Denmark that can break out in a Danish bar at a certain time of night, or at family and social gatherings and is very much part of the Danish tradition and culture.

Anderskov takes 10 of these songs and moves them through the prism of contemporary interpretation. The idea is good, the execution questionable. The exposition of the source material – the strong melodic character of folkloric material – is fragmented in da-da-esque gestures, before moving into episodes of free interpretation. Thus, we get a sense of having arrived at our destination without having left the station. By obscuring the music's origins – it could well be abstracted fragments from Alban Berg's *Lulu* — we get neither the essence of the music's purpose and quickly get lost in a kind of no man's land of free expression "on the precipice of the avant garde," as the accompanying notes claim.

By obscuring the music's purpose, its meaning becomes obscure by avoiding the nitty gritty of developing and shaping the source material through developmental techniques such as variation, inversion, augmentation, and ultimately fragmentation or even like *Lulu*, using Schoenberg's 12-tone technique, before arriving at an abstracted coda.

Stuart Nicholson

Roger Beaujolais
Bags of Vibes

StayTuned ST013 (CD) ★★★★

Roger Beaujolais (vb), Jim Mullen (g), Robin Aspland (p), Simon Thorpe (b) and Winston Clifford (d). Rec. 2017

Originally set for 2020 release, this session was stymied by lockdown, so it's good to have it now. Mullen guests on three tracks, otherwise it's the line-up that Beaujolais used on his earlier StayTuned label albums. In other words, this a regular band and it shows.

Given that the album is a tribute to Milt Jackson, Beaujolais' inspiration, it's apposite that it should open with his riff-based 'Blues for Bags', this incorporating the surging cohesion offered by Thorpe and Clifford as they complement the leader's opening statement, Aspland's piano and Mullen's booting chorded figures.

Thereafter, it's an array of pieces associated with Jackson in one way or another, with John Lewis's 'Django' first off, Thorpe propelling the group into swing after the solemn opening as Beaujolais plays it his way, four-malleted as ever, building a strong, multi-layered solo. Mullen re-appears for Wes Montgomery's 'Jingles', his bubbling line buoyed up on the groove set up by this peerless rhythm section, the leader brim-full of ideas.

In contrast comes Jackson's 'Some Kinda Waltz', quite considered, ahead of 'SKJ', this illustrating Jackson's gift for creating originals with built-in momentum as Mullen and Beaujolais voice this clever piece together. Aspland makes the running on 'Heartstrings', its more lyrical aspect prompting an extended piano solo of genuine quality before the Latin-flavoured 'Come To Me', which again lifts off splendidly, with Aspland especially fervent. Beaujolais exults on Artie Shaw's 'Moonray,' this recorded by a Jackson quartet way back in 1955. What better closer than 'Bags Groove', taken at a stately clip, the biblically-bearded leader's creativity uppermost. Bags would have approved, for sure. **Peter Vacher**

Black Lives
People Of Earth

Jammin' Colours JC024-011-1 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Reggie Washington (b, el b) Christie Dashiell, Tutu Puoane (v), Sharriff Simmons (spoken word), Jean-Paul Bourelly, David Gilmore, Adam Falcon, Mars Milton (g, v) Pierrick Pédron (as), Jacques Schwarz-Bart (ts), Marcus Strickland (ts, bcl), Andy Milne, Grégory Privat, Federico Gonzalez Peña, (p, ky), Gene Lake, Marque Gilmore, Sonny Troupé, Julian Singh (d, perc, samples) and DJ Grazzhoppa (turntables). Rec. 2023

People Of Earth, the second instalment of the Black Lives project, is a worthwhile sequel to the 2022 debut *From Generation To Generation*. As was the case first time round the cast list is extensive, with players drawn from across the world to continue (rather than simply acknowledge) the global importance of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The presence of veterans such as bassist-leader Reggie Washington, guitarists Jean-Paul Bourelly and David Gilmore, and poet Shariff Simmons lends to the work gravitas, but the input of younger artists, such as two outstanding singers, the American Christie Dashiell and the South African Tutu Puoane, ensures that

Cyrille Aimée

The Bourne Identities

Shiver
Shiver Meets Matthew Bourne Volume 2

Discus Music DISCUS170CD (CD, DL) ★★★

Matthew Bourne (p, syn), Andy Champion (el b), Joost Hendrickx (d) and Chris Sharkey (el g). Rec. 17 July 2021

Paula Rae Gibson featuring Matthew Bourne
Loving In Real Time

33 Xtreme 33Xtreme022 (CD, DL) ★★★

Paula Rae Gibson (v), Matthew Bourne (clo, Dulcitone, har, syn, p). Rec. date not stated

Matthew Bourne's extensive hunger for collaboration was starved during lockdown, and the second of two summer days playing with Northeastern trio Shiver at the pianist's Yorkshire Dales home, stove lit and tunes and yarns shared at night, has a happy intensity. Bourne switched between piano and the radically rebuilt, polyphonic analogue MemoryMoog synth he debuted on *moogmemory* (2016), while Shiver guitarist Chris Sharkey electronically processed the quartet live, making instruments slip identities. A bit like Four Tet's early folktronica albums, the result is intimately experimental.

'Chromakode' begins in an unfixed, ambient mist, the players swooping and clashing like birds on the wing, low and heavy to the ground, Bourne's piano bass notes acting as drums while drummer Joost Hendrickx adds percussive colour, before Bourne rips into rapid, hummingbird shivers. 'Flight of the Leather Bird' sees Bourne settle into a passage of classical beauty which Sharkey's warp-factor fractures like glass, then switch to Moog on 'Pasadena Gravy', sculpting SF soundscapes in sustained, slow waves. 'From Ohio' moves from West Riding dales to Midwest plains, Bourne seeming to pluck his piano, guitar-like, before distortion summons stampeding buffalo ghosts.

The 19-minute 'Cactus & Roulette' is a near-symphonic climax, piano ringing clear, before a movement led by Sharkey's horn-like, electric guitar shreds amid dub echoes. Only Andy Champion's bass holds his traditional rhythmic ground as musical natures transition around him. This companionable home session finds both unity and freedom, physical presence and its processed erasure.

Bourne's collaboration with singer-songwriter Paula Rae Gibson was remotely recorded, as Gibson sent him songs from her debut *No More Tiptoes*' study of grief, and he sent unrecognisable tracks back. Gibson in turn sang fresh lyrics in single takes, creating a wholly new song-cycle tracing obsessive love's molten heat. She's tremulously on the edge in 'Breathing You', Bourne comping on piano and burnishing with cello, then falls deeper into the consuming fire.

Her husky voice recalls Kate Bush at her most sensual on 'Kisses Down His Back', stretching languorously over the piano's spare, supportive frame. Syllables are picked through like minefields, and soar and saw through sultry air. Pizzicato cello meets sibilant whispers on 'In the Hole of More of This', words coming in expulsive gasps. Bourne is most overt on 'Ride the Light', his harmonium suggesting sonorous, celestial church organ then folk-like accordion, as close-miked gusts of breath precede ecstatic proclamations. "Be everything with each other," Gibson sings, sounding drugged with love. "Look in your eyes and die."

Her and Bourne's long-distance musical union is less overwhelming, but finely consummated. **Nick Hasted**

there is an evolving freshness in the sound palette. In any case, while the large assemblage of players create rhythms that reflect the vast richness of the black diaspora, so that the music is by turns soulful, funky and African-Caribbean, there is always the attention to detail, composer's integrity and improvisatory verve that are fundamental in the jazz aesthetic.

The songs are at a very high creative level. Whether the piece in question is Sonny Troupé's 'On Sel Rev', with its riveting Guadeloupean percussive base; or Jacques Schwarz-Bart's 'I Apologise', the kind of lithe mid-tempo groover D'Angelo would be proud of, the results are outstanding. More than a supergroup, Black Lives is a musical movement that delivers social and political messages that need to be heeded in the form of music that really should be heard the world over. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Stephen Buono's Church Chords
elvis, he was Schlager

Otherly Love/Bandcamp (LP, DL) ★★★

Stephen Buono (prod) plus various personnel inc. Jeff Parker, Nels Cline, Brandon Seabrook (g), Ricardo Dias Gomes, Thalma de Freitas, Kristin Slipp (v), Devin Hoff (el b), Sam Barsh (ky), Kenny Wollesen and John Herndon (perc). Rec. date not stated

An interesting case of somebody behind the scenes stepping forward to good effect. Stephen Buono has worked in jazz PR in America for many years but he is also a producer, songwriter and leader of Church Chords, an evolving project with a wide, eclectic range of contributors.

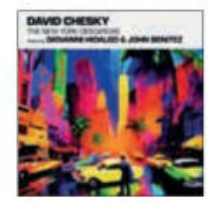
The musicians are drawn from far and wide, and include the percussionists John Herndon and Kenny Wollesen, keyboardist Jim Baker and multi-instrumentalist Ben Boye, who between them have played with the likes of Tortoise, Tom Waits and Bill Frisell. If that gives an indication of the jazz, electronica, rock and alto-pop sensibilities of the resulting creation, then of no less significance is the input of modern day guitar heroes Nels Cline, Jeff Parker and Brandon Seabrook, who all inject bracing experimental sounds as well as high-octane improv.

The music is impressive because of the coherence with which Buono has managed to stitch together numerous sessions that took place in Chicago and Los Angeles over several years and craft a signature that is often steeped in the dim-lit melancholy of progressive Brazilian music *à la* Arto Lindsay or Vinicius Cantuaria. The songs are mostly short and melodically rich, with occasionally rhapsodic vocals that are well served by the channeled aggression in the rhythm and the lush finesse of the soundscapes. Out of restrictive genre but well in the bracket of liberating originality. **Kevin Le Gendre**

David Chesky/The New Latin Trio
The New York Descargas

Audiophile Society AS21 (DL) ★★★

David Chesky (p), Giovanni Hidalgo (cga) and John Benitez (b). Rec. November 2023



A *descarga*, in case you didn't know, is an improvisation based on Cuban music themes, primarily *son montuno*, but also *guajira*, *bolero*, *guaracha* and *rumba*.

While Afro-Cuban jazz stereotypically suggests a large ensemble, probably including horns and call-and-response singing, with The New Latin Trio we have three seasoned specialists taking a somewhat different approach. Their (neat) idea is to combine traditional Cuban styles with contemporary ideas of classical harmony, and it works seamlessly.

The tracks don't have titles, simply a numbered list of *descargas*. Restrained power is the order of the day. Hidalgo is in the engine room, supplying the insistent Latin pulse, while Chesky adds the cool, streamlined harmonic stylings, and Benitez provides the oil that keeps the whole machine purring along.

At times they sound like a conventional jazz trio, with plenty of acoustic space available for us to appreciate their formidable rhythmic chops. At other times the sound is almost skeletal, since Chesky plays few solos, and often lays out in order to give the others a free rein.

In an effort to preserve the authenticity of the original performances, David Chesky likes to record music with a minimum of post-production. He's also a music business entrepreneur who, among other things, sells digital music in high resolution formats. *The New York Descargas* is therefore available in a range of hi-res audio formats. **Peter Jones**

Dave Douglas

John Crawford
Room For Dancing

Elsden Music EM06 (CD, LP, DL) ★★

John Crawford (p, v), Shirley Smart (clo), Guillermo Hill (g), Alec Dankworth, Andy Hamill (b), Simon Pearson (d), Andres Ticino, Jansen Santana (perc), Eleonora Claps and Linley Weir (v). Rec. July 2017 and August 2022

Pianist-composer Crawford cites his Spanish-English parentage as a vital factor in his music-making. His bio outlines his credentials as one of the UK's premier Latin piano specialists, while also emphasising his forays into the pop-world as well as his many credits performing with jazz artists. So, a kind of pianistic all-rounder but one with a predilection for the Latin-ate style, one might conclude.

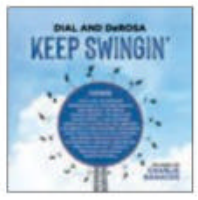
That said, Crawford's music, as exemplified in these varied compositions – while it has direct appeal and engages the listener with its danceable tempos and engaging structures – is a far cry from the normal brief for review in this magazine. The Latin influences, as principally conveyed by the insistent percussion, are dominant as is the use of repeated motifs with the opportunities for jazz improvisation largely absent. 'Maîte's dance' opens with piano over shuffle percussion, jumps to jazz piano briefly, and seesaws back to the theme with a percussion finish. 'Elena's Dance' is sparser, concentrating on repeated figures. 'Club Del Campesino' introduces Smart's cello over a tango rhythm, with a percussion underlay. 'Things' with Ms Claps (Mrs Crawford) is sombre but attractive, and highlights a Dankworth solo, this bassist a player who has functioned in this kind of cross-cultural situation before. Billy Joel's 'And So It Goes' has Claps and Crawford in reflective mood, Crawford's piano Jarrett-like. Readers who veer towards the eclectic or who favour a variety of approaches should investigate.

Peter Vacher

Garry Dial and Rich DeRosa
Keep Swingin'

Outside In Music/Bandcamp (DL) ★★★

Garry Dial (p), Rich DeRosa (cond, ds), Nick Marchione (tpt,flg), Ryan Keberle (t), Andrew Gould (as,flt), Chris Oatts (ts, flt),), Joe Hubbard, Jay Anderson +3 (b) DeRosa + 4 (d) guest soloists incl Terrell Stafford (tpt), Jerry Bergonzi (ts), Wayne Kranz and Mike Stern (g). Rec. date not stated.



Specialist jazz educators, even great ones, rarely get a mention outside interviews and biographies. *Keep Swingin'* brings the name of one such, Charlie Banacos, to light. All the compositions are Banacos originals – lead sheets are included in the booklet for fellow educators to take note – and the repertoire ranges from fusion to swinging modern jazz.

The project was organised by pianist/educator Garry Dial – a Banacos pupil for 35 years – and drummer/conductor/educator Rich DeRosa, whose composing and arranging credits range from JALC to commercials, TV and film. Both spent early careers playing jazz live – they crossed paths with Gerry Mulligan and Dial spent a decade with Red Rodney – and both are effective, though generic, in a broadly modernist style.

The meat of the album, though, are the 10 Banacos compositions, originally designed for a correspondence course, but now crisply re-configured for the album's heavyweight, ex Banacos-pupil guests. Each track has different personnel – five drummers and five bassists are among the 34 musicians named – and lead soloists range from trumpeter Terrell Stafford to guitarist Wayne Krantz. Banacos' scholarly compositions hold the album together and give it a coherent heart.

Highlights include Stafford's solo on the blousy title track, guitarist Wayne Kranz and bassist Joe Hubbard delivering 'The Great Awakening's' Weather Report vibe and Jerry Bergonzi's imperious tenor sax on the swinging modernism of 'Mummy's Curse'.

Mike Hobart

Peter DiCarlo
The Other Side

Shifting Paradigm Records SP196 (CD, DL)

★★

Peter DiCarlo (as), Uraz Kivaner (p), Ozan Musluoğlu (b) and Ferit Odman (d). Rec. 21 May 2023

Originally from New York and busy around town, DiCarlo moved to Izmir, Turkey, three years ago and now works there with this quartet. This second album claims to move on from traditional jazz and to meld fusion with Turkish influences; that may be so, but the initial effect on the striking title track is one of Big Apple intensity married to a free-flowing percussive underlay, the alto strident and strong, piano and drums full-on.

All seven compositions are DiCarlo's, the performances mostly short and probably geared to radio play, their variety illustrating his talent for creating nifty yet evocative themes. 'Yesterday's Tomorrow' is calmer, sinuous almost, the serpentine lines echoing middle-eastern traditions, 'Do Dat' has the kind of bluesy, soulful approach that makes this listener think DiCarlo may have heard Cannonball Adderley's more funky recordings and absorbed his solo approach.

This track also highlights pianist Kivaner's most striking solo. 'Little Footsteps' is another engaging piece, the group settling into swing, its structure designed to catch DiCarlo's daughter's early progress. If David Sanborn combined with Cannonball's bluesy side is your preference, then give DiCarlo a listen. I might have preferred rather more of the title track's vibrancy and improvisatory *élan*. **Peter Vacher**

Dave Douglas
Gifts

Greenleaf Music GRE-CD 1108 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★

Dave Douglas (t), James Brandon Lewis (ts), Rafiq Bhatia (g) and Ian Chang (d). Rec. 23 December 2023

Despite run-outs with luminaries like Lage and Halvorson, Douglas isn't best known for collaborating with guitarists, and certainly none has contributed so much to the mood and structures of a Douglas release as Bhatia does here.

Bhatia and Chang are long-time chums from the rock band Son Lux and they bring a roar and rawness to *Gifts* not common to Douglas' works. Where the trumpeter's last release, *Marches*, was a blatant call to on street protest, *Gifts* is a more inward, emotionally complex album. Douglas muses on the gift of music and the musical tradition that give us support and inspiration in what can appear a chaotic and ugly world.

And to this end the album's compassionate but emotional soul is a four-song sequence of Billy Strayhorn songs. 'Take the A Train' is a stunning re-working, with an echo of Zeppelin's 'Kashmir' in Bhatia's chordings. Lewis' tenor is absent from the other 3 songs, but if 'Rain Check' is nakedly danceable, it all changes, inevitably, with 'Blood Count'. It begins admirably straight-ahead, but Bhatia's textures and distorted stabs heave Douglas aside until the maelstrom is resolved (or flatlines?) with one sustained note from the returning horn.

It's fascinating to compare Ian Shaw's treatment of similar material on *An Adventurous Dream* reviewed elsewhere in these august pages. Another example of how great material just keeps giving, whoever the artist is, whatever the style they choose to play in. Which is largely Douglas' point. **Andy Robson**

Paul Dunmall Quintet with Ed Puddick & The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Big Band
Soultime Again

Stoney Lane SLR1937 (CD, DL) ★★★★

Paul Dunmall (ts, as), Percy Pursglove (t), Glen

Wizards of Aus!

AustraLYSIS
Dualling

Earshift Music EAR085 (CD, DL)

★★★★

Roger Dean (p, elec), Phil Slater (t), Sandy Evans (saxophones), Greg White (computer, elec, b, d) and Hazel Smith (text, v). Rec. December 2021

Sam Anning
Earthen

Earshift Music EAR075 (CD, DL)

★★★★

Sam Anning (b, comp), Mat Jodrell (t), Carl Mackey (as), Andrea Keller (p, Wurlitzer), Theo Carbo (g) and Kyrie Anderson (d). Rec. 2023

Callum Allardice
Cinematic Light Orchestra

Earshift Music EAR087 (CD, DL)

★★★★

Callum Allardice (comp, arr, cond, g) plus the 27 piece Cinematic Light Orchestra. Rec. 2023

Madison Carter
Polymorphic

Earshift Music EAR089 (CD, DL)

★★★

Massillon Carter (d, vb, perc, celeste, el p), Niran Dasika (t, picc t, synth), Flora Carbo (as, bcl), Jessica Lindsay Smith (f, perc) and Imogen Cygler (vn). Rec. date not stated

As I have previously flagged up in these pages, the Australian jazz scene (largely, but by no means totally, concentrated in the cities of Melbourne and Sydney), is vibrant, highly creative and extremely original. Regular updates from Earshift Music reveal the quality and depth of what is going on Down Under and the picture they paint unfailingly reinforces the positive impression of my own first hand impressions of what is a vital, yet still relatively unexplored area of jazz. It's not a scene where one man or woman leads, while others draw on the original inspiration and follow, instead everyone is their own leader, following their own path with such determined individuality they create their own space in the music.

Take austraLYSIS' *Dualling* for example. Here is a sophisticated management of electronic sounds and acoustic instruments that has musical direction, rather than suffocating ambient washes with random bumps and bangs that sound as if the man next door is putting the bins out, which so often passes as 'electronic jazz'. As with any successful production, it is not the means used to create an end, but the end that it achieves that counts, and if a certain amount of post production work and editing is involved, so what?

Sam Anning's *Earthen* decompresses the moods to thoughtful introspection while retaining melodic integrity. The ensemble contains two of Oz's finest – Andrea Keller on piano and Julien Wilson on tenor – who match Anning-as-composer's intent, both in ensemble and solo. The thoughtful use of electronics here is of watercolour washes, and works well in what is a well conceived and thoughtfully executed album – even the drifts in and out of abstraction sit well within the overall conception.

If Anning's album might be described as miniatures, then Callum Allardice is a big picture man of Carravagio-esque conception on *Cinematic Light Orchestra*. These are not small band compositions inflated for the 27-piece ensemble, but conceived as works for large ensemble, such as the epic 'Phobos & Deimos,' which begins small with Allardice's guitar outlining the melody and is a masterful exercise in building tension and ultimate release. Collective improvisation on 'The Vibe' is managed well and ultimately features that splendid pianist Luke Sweeting to profound effect.

It'd be good if some enterprising promoters brought the New Zealander and key members of the ensemble to tour. Maddison Carter, also from NZ, does not see things through the wide lens of Allardice, but he is equally concerned with shifting colours, textures and the balance between with written and improvised on *Polymorphic*. More modernistic, in the true sense of the word, in conception, its thoughtful deployment of means are rewarded by the ends it achieves, modest to be sure, but with sufficient wit and wisdom to draw you back to this highly original music. **Stuart Nicholson**

Leach (p), Dave Kane (b), Miles Levin (d), Ed Puddick (arr, cond), Rebecca Wing, Nathaniel Evans (as), Ben Partridge, Matthew Maidment (ts), Luke Chakrabarti (bs), Timothy Rabbitt, Robin Skerrett, Charlie Humphrey-Lewis, James Routledge (t), Henry Hanssen, Ollie Plant, Elsaid Juka, Edward Simons (tb) and Alexandra Hamilton (tba). Rec. 27 May 2022

UK sax titan Paul Dunmall has been notably prolific of late, releasing a slew of albums recorded by different configurations. This might be one of the most ambitious so far, teaming his working quintet with a 14-piece big band.

Dunmall's most common *modus operandum*, of course, tends towards the free end of the music and it's when his group are stretching out into uncharted territory that they sound most convincing. On pieces like the aptly-named 'Freestyle,' the quintet churns and roils while Ed Puddick's massed horn arrangements billow and swell around the central core. At its best this approach recalls George Russell's 'Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature.' Less successful are the pieces more closely allied to rhythm. Opening tack, 'Soultime,' harks back to Dunmall's teenage years playing in a soul band, and is aiming for a good-foot vibe but feels like a slog under the weight of all the brass.

The set ends with 'Sacred Hymn,' a typically Dunmallian (for which, read Coltrane-influenced) blast of spiritual yearning. Here, Puddick's lush arrangements add an epic feel entirely in keeping with Dunmall's big-hearted message. **Daniel Spicer**

Elephant9
Mythical River

Rune Grammofon RCD/LP 2235 (CD, LP DL)

★★★

Ståle Storløkken (ky), Nikolai Hængsle (b) and Torstein Lofthus (d) Rec. date not stated

Elephant9 have been presenting their freshly invigorating contemporary spin on the Hammond B3-led ensemble tradition ever since emerging amid a surge of long-haired, feral, kick-ass Norwegian nu-prog bands around the 2010s. But the Supersilent keys man Ståle Storløkken and his trio are less full blast on *Mythical River* than earlier recordings, although they had already been slightly mellowing on their most recent album *Arrival of the new Elders Land,* issued in 2021.

Merging elements from the likes of tripped-out Krautrock, Post-mod Small Faces, Syd Barrett's Floyd-ish psych-rock, Eno-esque ambience and the outlier Hammond jazz of Larry Young and Medeski, Martin and Wood 'Jam band' aesthetics, through to jazz-rock's abstract *Bitches Brew*-like textures and Mahavishnu - minus the baroque pyrotechnics – Elephant9 still sound like they were brought up on nu-metal and contemporary electronica as much as those more retro sounds.

The new album's sophistication and electric-fuelled thrills lie in the parts where Storløkken stretches the analogue sonic world and textural range of the Hammond B3 to its limits on a set of tuneful originals, while bass and drums lock horns for some ferociously compact grooves.

Anyone, including this scribe, who's ever been to any of their dynamite concerts might believe live performance to be this music's natural environment, but the new recording shouldn't disappoint the true disciples. **Selwyn Harris**

Photo: Richard Kaby

Paul Dunmall

Equal Spirits
Wise and Waiting

Ubuntu/ECN Music UBU157 (CD, 2 LP, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Raphael Clarkson (tb), Nosihe Zulu, Nokwanda Shabangu (v), Chris Batchelor (t, flhn), Mark Lockheart (ts), Yonela Mnana (p), Elliot Galvin (sampling/ processing), Amaeshi Ikechi, Ben Rowarth (b), Siphiwe Shiburi (d), Judy Treggor (f, picc), Naomi Burrell (vn), Alison D'Souza (vla), Zosia Jagodzinska (clo, b), Chloe Morgan, Rosie Middleton, Michael Solomon Williams (v, a), Sue Addison (alto/ tenor sackbut), Jeremy West (cornetto/tenor cornetto), Phil Merriman (org, syn, el p), Junior-Alli Balogun (perc), Rosie Bergonzi (perc, tubular bells) and Yuval Juba Wetzler (elec perc). Rec. date not stated

A decade ago, trombonist/ composer Raph Clarkson was a key figure in the charismatic, wackily eclectic, nu-funk UK ensemble World Service Project, but productive years with that band, and a freelance career playing everything from salsa to trad, prog, and free-improv, made it likely he would go his own way, as he did as a leader with 2018's *Soldiering On*, and 2019's *Resolute*. Those albums revealed that the gifted Clarkson was devoting himself to developing the most personal music he could - autobiographical, whimsical, political, and driven by his twin passions of open music-making and music education. Equal Spirits is an astonishingly imaginative next stage in that mission, bringing together 24 participants from the UK (including Chris Batchelor, Elliot Galvin and Mark Lockheart) and South Africa's jazz scene.

Clarkson gracefully segues horn hooks, flying improv and hymnally jazzy South African warmth all over the set – notably on 'Back Again' with its jubilant Cape Town dance vibe, the brass-funky 'Skip', and a horn-swapping hook on 'To Jo'burg' that makes it hard to stay in your chair. Gentle gospel choruses and synth-orchestral harmonies swell from bass and piano duets ('Hymn'), and the title track blooms from mysterious abstractions into rapturously tender choral song. The legacy of the great South African generations that have included Hugh Masekela, Abdullah Ibrahim and Bheki Mseleku, as well as their European champions like Keith Tippett and Django Bates have rarely been celebrated as empathically and ecstatically as this. Clarkson perhaps likes the specificity of spoken word more than some listeners who might prefer the eloquence of pure sound in an overly garrulous world, but *Wise and Waiting* is an extraordinary, impassioned, and devoted one-off just the same. **John Fordham**

Amaro Freitas

Amaro Freitas
Y'Y

Psychic Hotline PSY 037 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Amaro Frietas (p, v, perc), Shabaka Hutchings (f, v), Jeff Parker (g, v), Viva Nana (whistles), Hamid Drake (d), Brandee Younger (hp) and Aniel Someillan (b). Rec. 2024

The Brazilian jazz pianist Amaro Freitas has previously released three trio albums that melded rhythms including *baião*, *frevo* and other traditional stylings of his Pernambuco roots with the aesthetics of John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk, with whom he shares a percussive muscularity.

Freitas' 2021's *Sankofa* dived into the stories of black Brazil (his left hand is Africa, he's said, and his right hand is Europe); his new solo album *Y'Y* (tha's eey-eh eey-eh, the word for 'water' or 'river' in the dialect of the Sateré Mawé people of Amazonas) is a journey into the heart of the Amazon basin. Where, as artists from Brazilian guitarist and pianist Egberto Gismonti and percussionist Nana Vasconcelos (check their 1976 ECM classic *Dança das Cabeças*) to lauded Australian performer and field recordist Vicki Hallet (who has just released the fabulous *Live At The Amazon*) continue to demonstrate, there is sublime music to be found in the quietest place on earth.

The first half of Freitas's audio-excursion is a leaf-rustling, wind-whistling, bird-calling adventure at once soothing and invigorating. inside his prepared piano are seeds, clothes, dominos and bits of wood - or if you like, sunsets and rivers, rainforests and thunderstorms, jungle spirits and ancestral knowledge. Opener 'Mapinguari' finds piano passages rolling over cymbals and shakers; the oh-so-atmospheric 'Gloriosa' features fluttering whistles and from Brandee Younger, gorgeous washes of harp. The title track, a duo representing opposing water flows, features Shabaka Hutchings on flute and echo-laden chants. 'Mar de Cirandeiras', a tribute to the circle dances of Freitas' youth, has its unconventional harmonies delivered on Fender Rhodes and acoustic piano, with Jeff Parker on lovely, ethereal guitar. An important work, imaginatively, beautifully rendered. **Jane Cornwell**

Bill Frisell
Orchestras

Blue Note 588374 (2 CD, 2 LP, 3LP, DL) ★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Bill Frisell (g), Thomas Morgan (b), Rudy Royston (d), Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra, Alexander Hanson (cond), Umbria Jazz Orchestra, Manuele Morbidini (cond) and Michael Gibbs (arr). Rec. January 2022

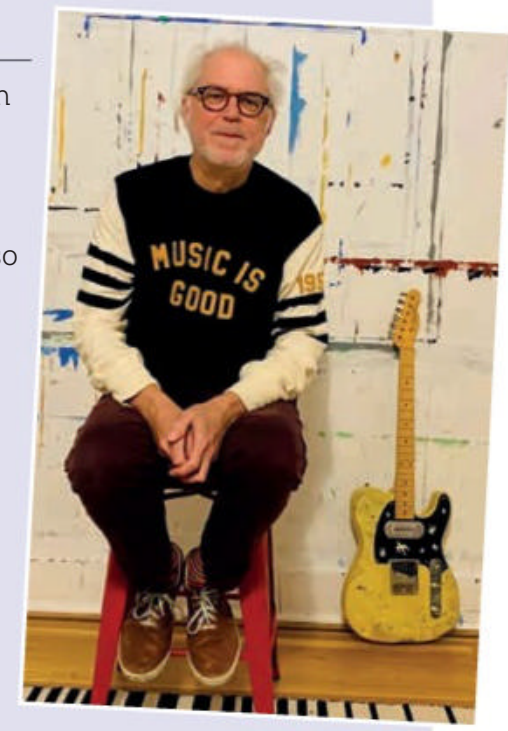


Photo: Carol d'Inverno

Bill Frisell has been conjuring an inspired solo soundscape for electric guitar for so long that the world has grown accustomed to that most downhome of axes being technically and electronically transformed into a big band. Now with the Brussels Philharmonic and Umbria Jazz orchestras, the chance comes to hear where his imagination takes him when the big backdrop is being painted by others.

Frisell is joined by regular partners in bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Rudy Royston - but the most important long-running connection here is the guitarist's 50-year relationship with the great Mike Gibbs, which began when he studied composition under Gibbs' tutelage at the Berklee School of Music in the mid-1970s. With his famously light touch and exquisite ambiguities of harmony and dynamics, the now 86-year-old Gibbs has arranged the music for the two January 2022 concerts in Belgium and Italy that form this set.

The repertoire stretches from staples of Frisell's songbook such as 'Strange Meeting' (with its gently dreamy harmonies turning to softly early-rockish guitar tones) to a gently swinging, orchestrally-lilting 'Sweet Rain', which Gibbs originally wrote in the 1960s for Stan Getz. Striking versions of standard songs include a tonally gleaming but wistful 'Lush Life' and a chorally-textured and reverential 'Beautiful Dreamer'.

The Umbria tracks however, with their smaller ensemble, are invitations to Frisell and the trio to play harder, and for Gibbs' arrangements to foreground his enthrallingly Gil Evans-inspired use of high woodwind and trumpet exclamations, and resonant deep brass - a combination that furnishes many of the collection's standout moments. Notable among them are Frisell's 'Monica Jane' (blending tender guitar lines into the band's voicelike harmonies), a choppy, seductively Evansesque 'Lookout for Hope', the blues-sleazy 'Levees' - and the Umbria finale, a thrillingly uplifting account of 'We Shall Overcome'. Blue Note have also issued a 3-LP vinyl set including extra material from both fine gigs. **John Fordham**

Kenny Garrett & Svoy
Who Killed AI?

Mack Avenue MAC 1210 (CD, DL) ★★

Kenny Garrett (as, ss, v) and Svoy (programming, p, v) Rec. date not stated

One of the significant exponents of the alto saxophone in the 1990s and 2000s, Kenny Garrett has long taken an interest in the world of machines and production, which is not surprising, given his work with Miles Davis in the electric late 1980s. This new collaboration with programmer-pianist Svoy could be seen as a distant cousin of *Tutu* or *Amandla* insofar as Garrett's horn is the lead voice cast against the beats created by Svoy, loosely in the role of Marcus Miller. The results are interesting, but rather inconsistent.

On one hand, the duo hit all the right notes on tracks such as 'Ascendence' and 'Divergence Tu-Dah', both of which have the hard pulsating rhythms and ferocity of timbre that characterise the best computer-based music such as hip-hop, house and drum 'n' bass, with the funky, brawny loops reflecting a deep dive into the world of plug-ins as well as a desire to plug in while playing.

The last piece, in which Garrett's saxophone is so heavily distorted that it comes as a thrash rock guitar being scraped across a bed of crunchy gravel, is exhilarating.

On the other hand, some of the softer, more tender soundscapes are too neutered, or in the case of a reprise of the standard 'My Funny Valentine' the romanticism of the melodic line and drifting, dry ice textures don't sit well together, so that the colliding worlds that are interesting elsewhere cancel each other out. Garrett and Svoy have a creative chemistry with potential but it needs development, hopefully before AI makes all that is real unreal. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Ghost-Note
Mustard n'Onions

Artistry/Mack Avenue ART7085 (CD) ★★★

Robert Sput Searight (d), Nate Werth (perc) with Sylvester Onyejiaka (s), Danny Wytanis (tb), Dominique Xavier Taplin, Bernard Wright (ky), Mark Lettieri, Eric Gales (g), MonoNeon and Marcus Miller (b). Rec. date not stated

Snarky Puppy alumni Searight and Werth finally follow up 2018's riotous *Swagism* with another big-noised funk excursion, this time stacked with a roster of super star guests. It all kicks off with the JB's tribute 'JB's Out!' although how much shouting of 'I feel good!', 'Oh, yeah!' and 'Take me to the bridge' really contributes to party funk is questionable. Of the guests, Eric Gales, wearer of the blues crown, adds some needed edge to the elongated jam, 'Grandma's Curtains'. There's a brief vox here and elsewhere which also marks out *Mustard n'Onions* as different from its predecessor. Marcus Miller is, of course, immaculate on 'Yellow Dan', not a judo reference, but a curious melange of Steely Dan meets the Yellowjackets, which reflects Searight and Dan's greed for anything with a funk resonance to it. But amid the mayhem it's Danny Wytanis' measured trombone that steals the show on 'Where's Danny?'. If breathless (not necessarily breathtaking) stunt funk is your thing, then enquire within. Don't get too excited about featuring Bernard Wright's last recordings. Though welcome, they are brief. **Andy Robson**

Gordon Grdina's The Marrow with Fathieh Honari
The Marrow With Fathieh Honari

Attaboygirl Records ABG-8 (CD, DL) ★★★★

Gordon Grdina (oud), Fathieh Honari (v), Hank Roberts (clo), Mark Helias (b) and Hamin Honari (perc). Rec. 2022

Although the oud is one of the emblematic instruments of the Middle East, it has been deployed to good effect in improvised music for decades, and the Vancouver-based Gordon Grdina, also an impressive guitarist, has emerged as an important exponent over the past 20 years, though the Juno award-winning artist warrants far greater exposure.

This fine new set is one of two current albums - the other being a duo session with German drummer Christian Lillinger – that confirm his ability. While Arabic *maquams* (modes) are a primary element of the compositions, the combination of string instruments – Grdina's oud, Hank Roberts' cello and Mark Helias' bass – is outstanding, as the blend of light and heavy timbres provides a vivid backdrop for the deeply moving lead vocal of Fathieh Honari while the percussion of her son Hamin, at times discreet, at times dynamic, lends to the ensemble sound a notable additional colour and energy. 'Raquib', with its spine tingling overture of pearled melodies set over a stately drone that then takes off into a celebratory dance, is a perfect example of the commanding beauty of this work.

Grdina's exploration of the riches of non-western music and its substantial improvisatory possibilities continues apace. A notable album from a major talent who should be seen on British stages. **Kevin Le Gendre**

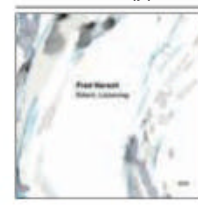
Photo: Erika Kapin Photography

Fred Hersch
Silent, Listening

ECM 2799 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Fred Hersch (p). Rec. May 2023



One gift that Fred Hersch has in abundance is to own his performances of works by other composers. His 1990s interpretations of Monk sounded like Hersch, every bit as much as they deferred to their composer, and this album kicks off with a version of Ellington and Strayhorn's 'Star Crossed Lovers' that sounds rather more like a Hersch original. That said, the sinister, slowly expanding aural landscape of the title track (a Hersch original) is as much on the borders of free jazz as anything this master of touch and subtlety has ever produced. Yet, by contrast, his 'Little Song' is sensitively joyous, its spiky melody singing over a typically challenging Hersch accompaniment.

Coming back to standards, that spikiness is immediately apparent in the melodic statement of 'Softly As In a Morning Sunrise', which develops Romberg's melody with a reverence that shines through the occasionally abstract setting. If you know the piece well, you marvel at his ingenuity. The same applies to the bleak opening interpretation of Alec Wilder's 'Winter of My Discontent', though there's a shining radiance in some of the later chords, before a long, beautiful and sensitive rendering of the piece that seems almost conventional. This absorbing interpretation alone is worth the price of the album, as Hersch shows that beauty, a brilliant keyboard touch, and a love for the song will always make for great pianistic art. **Alyn Shipton**

Bob Holz
Holz-Stathis Collaborative

MV Audio 134151 (CD, 2 LP, DL) ★★

Bob Holz (d) featuring Randy Brecker (t), Ada Rovatti, Brandon Fields (s), Dean Brown, John McLaughlin, Jamie Glaser (g), Jean Luc Ponty (vn), Darryl Jones, Ralphe Armstrong (b), Rob Stathis, Diane Moreira (v), Airto Moreira and Alex Acuna (perc). Rec. date not stated

This release climaxes with the tune 'Lookin' Back' and that's exactly what this amalgam of fusion energy and smooth jazz does: it evokes a nostalgia for virtuosic jazz rock with some iconic names on board, but there's little new to thrill to.

The prospect of McLaughlin and Ponty reunited on 'World Turned Upside Down' intrigues, but doesn't ignite, while Randy Brecker's contributions evoke funk fun days with his brother (especially on 'Side Scratch' alongside Ada Rovatti and Darryl Jones) but you'd do better listening to the real thing.

Dean Brown does his muscular rock out voicings throughout, doing his best to spark up the sometimes leaden grooves, but with smooth vox ballads like 'Island Sun Love' it's hard not to hit skip. Harsh, maybe, and this genre of accomplished but hardly innovative revisiting has always had a constituency in North American markets. But given how young Brits like Flo Moore and Emma Rawicz relish edgier fusion grooves, this artery-thickening runout isn't one you'd recommend, despite those starry guests.

Andy Robson

Bill Laurance and The Untold Orchestra at the EFG London Jazz Fetival

Photo: Tatiana Gorilovsky

Lucien Johnson
Ancient Relics

Deluge/Bandcamp (LP, DL) ★★★

Lucien Johnson (s, p), Natalia Lagi'taua Mann (hp), Jonathan Crayford (p, Wurlitzer p), Tom Callwood (b), Julien Dyne (perc) and Cory Champion (d, vb). Rec. date not stated

In recent years, the term 'spiritual jazz' has become increasingly used to describe a sub-genre of music: rather than signifying any genuine mystical-religious convictions underpinning an artist's work, it's often simply short-hand for "sounds like Alice Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders." By that criterion, then, New Zealand saxophonist Lucien Johnson's second date as a leader is the most spiritual album imaginable.

Given that Alice Coltrane's *Journey in Satchidananda* is one of the unassailable cornerstones of the original so-called spiritual jazz of the 1960s and 70s, it might be somewhat rash to rip it off. Yet, for the album's opening title track, that's exactly what Johnson attempts, with a *tanpura* drone, a deep and leisurely double bass vamp, and a cascading harp shimmer – all calculated to sound almost exactly like Ms Coltrane's classic.

The pattern continues throughout the record. 'Space Junk,' with its tanpura/harp haze, funky bass vamp and earthy tenor is clearly nodding towards Joe Henderson's 1974 collaboration with Alice Coltrane, *The Elements*. And the set's closer, 'Satellites,' is an absolute dead-ringer for one of Pharoah Sanders' joyously upbeat early-70s paeans to peace and understanding. Only not as good. At best, this album will send you back into the warm embrace of the originals.

Daniel Spicer

Simon Lasky Group
For The Dreamers

Ubuntu Music UBU0158 (CD, DL) ★★★

Simon Lasky (p, ky), Tim Garland (ss), Paul Booth (ts), Peter Mongaya (g), James Suggs (t), Elias Tona (b), Jonathan Thomas (d) and Ona K (v). Rec. date not stated

UK-born, US-based Simon Lasky is a very highly regarded composer, pianist and educator who has also made his mark with a series of YouTube interviews with the likes of John McLaughlin and Vince Mendoza.

He's assembled a top-flight band of star quality musicians from both sides of the pond to realise his latest album, which for the first time features his arrangements of a choice selection of pop songs ancient and modern, alongside his original compositions. Lasky's compositional chops shine on the sombrely portentous 'Half A World Away', a moody quasi-classical duet for piano and guitar, but the predominant sound is a smoothly muscular contemporary fusion, with plenty of tight rhythm arrangements, neat harmonic twists and warm, soulful vocals from Ona K.

He's not afraid to embrace the musical mainstream, and this album should find a ready audience among those who appreciate the airily virtuosic melodicism of Pat Metheny or the guitar-led studio polish of Steely Dan. Guest Brits Paul Booth and Tim Garland hold their own effortlessly among the assertive US crew who comprise Lasky's regular working band, and the whole album exudes confidence - the arrangement of 'Bye Bye Blackbird' is an imaginative re-framing. If you've always thought that Michael Jackson's 'Human Nature' would have been improved if the King Of Pop had thought to include some odd-number bars, scat interludes, and a bass solo in the original arrangement, then you need wait no longer - this album is for you.

Eddie Myer

Bill Laurance & The Untold Orchestra
Bloom

ACT Music ACT 9059-2 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★

Bill Laurance (p, el p, syn), Rory Storm (cond), and The Untold Orchestra.
Rec. 21, 22 and 23 September 2022

It's 10 years since classically-trained piano virtuoso Bill Laurance stepped out from the long (rather funky) shadow of Snarky Puppy to explore his own vision of what contemporary, jazz-fuelled, music can sound like. His 2014 debut solo album, *Flint*, was bursting with urgently emotive melodies, punchy contrapuntal rhythms, and indeed, strings. Now with a discography spanning 12 albums and EPs ranging from solo piano, experimental electronica, and synthy-fusion, to fully blown orchestral live recordings, 'prolific' is a bit of an understatement for Laurance, especially as he's also clocked up 20 years of recording and performing with Snarky Puppy.

Thus we arrive in the present and a new era with ACT Music – the label on which Laurance released the universally praised *Where You Wish You Were* duo set with fellow Snarky founder Michael League. The latter album revelled in acoustic purity and spacious melodicism and that pristine aesthetic continues here with Manchester's Untold Orchestra – an ensemble that has something of a symbiotic understanding of the pianist's dancing rhythmic language and overlapping phrases – they wrap themselves around every pianistic phrase. Drum-less yet grooving heavily throughout, Laurance's lithe piano solos break things up and retain an improvised edge on what is a highly composed, expertly controlled suite with melody and groove teased out to an epic scale. Cinematic yet intimately detailed (and beautifully recorded and mixed), *Bloom* triumphs as a soundtrack to an invisible film – where it sits stylistically is in the ear of the beholder. **Mike Flynn**

Mark Lockheart
Smiling

Edition EDN1233 (CD, DL) ★★★★

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Mark Lockheart (ts, ss), Laura Jurd, Mike Soper (t), Harry Maund (tb), Jim Rattigan, Anna Drysdale (fr h), Nathaniel Facey (as), George Crowley (cl), James Allsopp (cl, b cl), Rowland Sutherland (fl, alo fl), John Parricelli (g), Tom Herbert (b) and Dave Smith (d).
Rec. 12 and 13 February 2023

Ubiquity is one of the major problems jazz musicians face in the UK once they achieve a degree of national recognition (more so now that continental touring effectively ended with Brexit).

Once you become a familiar face on the jazz circuit, you are pigeonholed into this stylistic box or that. One way to break-out of this impasse is to change your musical backdrop as to invalidate any audience preconceptions.

Mark Lockheart, who has achieved this neat trick before, comes up with a really interesting piece of work with *Smiling*. From the modest opening figures of 'Morning Smiles' it evolves in a way that makes use of the expanded harmonic palette the permutation of instruments Lockheart has chosen, and as the album develops from track to track it is apparent he has come up with a very personal and original slant on the use of jazz improvisation and harmonies over a rock-influenced rhythmic conception.

You just get the feeling that if Lockheart could tour this band it would make for a really absorbing and unique concert presentation.

Stuart Nicholson

Elgar Room Royal Albert Hall

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Charles McPherson

Jonny Mansfield
Quartet! Live At Pizza Express

Resonant Postcards/Bandcamp RP002
(CD, DL) ★★★★

Jonny Mansfield (vb), Will Barry (p), Will Sach (b) and Luke McCarthy (d). Rec. 14 January 2024

Mansfield is not one to let the grass grow under his feet, and this release comes hot on the heels of his last release of chamber-jazz, as the latest in a long line of diverse projects that often showcase his compositional and arranging skills, as with his mighty Elftet project.

This recording features him at the helm of a quartet of his equally youthful peers, live in concert. The super-tight execution of the knotty theme that closes 'Rivals' shows that control and arrangement are still important parts of his musicality, but the live format, and the intimacy of the quartet setting, allows the music to really stretch out, breathe, and canter gaily into new pastures.

It's all the better for it: while everyone contributes some bravura solos, it's the empathy and mutual understanding of the quartet that really shines through. Drummer Luke McCarthy really builds up an impressive head of steam: superb bassist Will Sach is thoughtful, solid and utterly musical, both as a solo voice and when supplying the vital connective tissue that holds the ensemble together: and the interplay between Mansfield and Will Barry is always satisfying and sometimes breathtaking in its strength and subtlety.

The compositions are strong and characterful, but also open-ended and exploratory enough to let the band really inhabit them. Fans of unlikely genre crossovers may be disappointed that 'REM Song' is not a tribute to Messrs Stipe and co, but aficionados of 1960s Blue Note will be delighted at its swinging evocation of the great Hancock/Hutcherson partnership. Really outstanding.

Eddie Myer

Charles McPherson
Reverence

Smoke Sessions Records SSR 2402
(CD, DL) ★★★

Charles McPherson (as), Terell Stafford (t), Jeb Patton (p), David Wong (b) and Billy Drummond (d). Rec. date not stated

McPherson's raucous, Parker-inflected modernism has graced over a score of own-name albums. His full-toned fluency on alto sax, honed by over a decade of Charles Mingus projects, delivers strong sentiments, controlled passion and a personal sound.

Now in his 80s, he remains true to his bebop roots on this spirited live recording from New York's bastion of mainstream modern jazz, the Smoke jazz club. Solos follow the form, two standards are in the mix and the up-front vibe is inflected with the blues. Trumpeter Terell Stafford's centred tone and firm phrasing stand out, and the supporting trio, from McPherson's 2020 album *Jazz Dance Suites* is sensitive, brims with confidence and swings.

The set opens with 'The Surge', a neatly arranged hard-bop blues, with solos for all, and the excellent bassist David Wong standing firm to Billy Drummond's explosive drumming. The self-explanatory 'Blues for Lonnie in Three' marks McPherson's long friendship with trumpeter and fellow Mingus alumni Lonnie Hillyer and the playful 'Dynamic Duo' flags up the saxophonist's love of comics as a child – here, pianist Jeb Patton's twisty, form-hugging lines impress. 'Come Rain or Come Shine' is a McPherson feature that comes at a lope; and 'Old Folks', the album's ballad, finds the saxophonist's lip less secure.

The project was conceived shortly after pianist and mentor Barry Harris died in late 2021, referenced here by set closer 'Ode to Barry', a Latin sprint. Outward-looking and played with zest, it confirms that for the leader, reverence is more concerned with respect in the present than nostalgia for the past. **Mike Hobart**

Greg Murphy
You Remind Me

Whaling City Sound WCS 141
(CD, DL) ★★★★

Greg Murphy (p, ky), Obasi Akoto (b), Steve Johns (d) with Zach Brock (vn), Malou Beauvoir, Frank Lacy (v) and David Stoller (hp, perc). Rec. 9 February 2023

Pianist and composer Greg Murphy's seventh album as leader, a heartfelt tribute to his late wife Nancy, is a frustrating affair. Recorded at the famous Van Gelder Studios in New Jersey, it showcases Murphy's impressive skills both on a keyboard and as a composer; his instincts for a catchy tune are unerring and five of his six originals here are terrific. The arrangements and the playing (Murphy on piano especially) are top-notch too.

So why the frustration? I think it's all down to the production and the use of vocals. The music's first rate, the sound is great, but the production (by Murphy) has a slight whiff of 1980s smooth jazz cheese – it's a terrible shame because material of this quality deserves so much better. As for the vocals, they just feel unnecessary, and inappropriate in this setting (as on a version of Dexter Wansel's 'Nights Over Egypt'); the playing is so good that additional adornment seems superfluous.

But truth is, I can't let *You Remind Me* go; whenever I hear the energetic Murphy tunes 'Shrimp Fried Rice' and 'Mornin'; the dancing delights of 'After Dark'; the virtuoso swagger and interplay of 'The Cure'; or the superb cover of Coltrane's 'Mr Day', I'm reminded that I'm listening to a major talent and I forget that cheesy title track.

So, *You Remind Me* is a curate's egg, but there is so much to enjoy and admire here that I'm willing to overlook its faults. Four stars it is then. **Kevin Whitlock**

Cornelia Nilsson
Where Do You Go?

Stunt Records STUCD 23092 (CD, DL)
★★★★

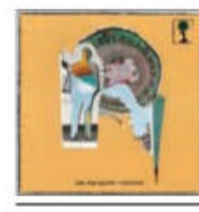
Cornelia Nilsson (d), Gabor Bolla (ts), Aaron Parks (p) and Daniel Franck (d). Rec. January 2022, June 2023

This album is in essence two trios, a piano trio with Arron Parks on piano on six numbers and a saxophone trio for four numbers. Nilsson has quietly been building a reputation for herself as a first rate accompanist in a variety of stylistic settings, and a quietly persuasive and inspiring educator.

This is her debut album, and it is worth checking out. You will not be disappointed. She is a class act, does not overplay (something that occurs all too often on debut albums), and has that indefinable element that comes with talent in seeming to make the rhythms dance. And while the Hungarian tenor player Gabor Bolla is impressive (the latest in a long line of excellent Hungarian tenor players), the absence of a chordal instrument occasionally errs towards monotony of tone; it does not help that the ear seems to demand in the exemplary playing of Aaron Parks, who gives every impression of enjoying these sessions, performing Nillsson originals like 'Ninni/Motions,' 'The Wanderer' and the Krzysztof Komeda 'For a Father' segued into her own 'Dirge for Europe.'

Stuart Nicholson

John Pope Quintet
Citrinitas



New Jazz & Improvised Music
NEW JAiM 17 (CD, DL)
★★★

John Pope (b, perc), Jamie Stockbridge (as, bs), Faye MacCalman (ts, cl), Graham Hardy (t), flhn) and Johnny Hunter (d), perc). Rec. 17-18 April 2023

Michael Moore/ John Pope/Johnny Hunter
Something Happened

New Jazz & Improvised Music
NEWJAiM 16 (CD, DL)
★★★

Michael Moore (a, cl), John Pope (b) and Johnny Hunter (d), perc). Rec. 6 June 2022

An avowed champion of the Northern, especially Newcastle, jazz scene, and with the support of the Arts Council and the splendid Help Musicians, here are two different projects from John Pope.

The quintet, with its busy, perhaps a little crowded front line, is energetic, urgent and free in spirit. Where 'Free Spin' jollies along, 'Shadow Work' is an ominous progression with trumpet and sax suitably tempestuous in mood. 'A Procession of Heads' as the name suggests finds the front

line battling and urgent against a succession of figures. The centre just about holds while part of the fun is how those horns veer toward a rambunctious chaos.

By contrast *Something Happened* showcases Moore's talent as the trio developed their themes and relationship before a live audience with the minimum of rehearsal. The testing heart of the show is the nearly 13-minute-long 'Some More/Middle of the Road', a thoughtful meditation that morphs into Asian intonations. An uplifting contrast is Hunter's 'First Half of May', a melodic lullaby, sweetly expressed. **Andy Robson**

Charlie Pyne
Nature is a Mother

33 Jazz 33JAZZ302 (CD, DL) ★★★

Charlie Pyne (b, v), Luke Pinkstone (ts, cl), Liam Dunachie (p) and Katie Patterson (d). Rec. 30-31 August, 2023

Singing female double bass players? Hmmm... well, there's Esperanza, and, er... oh yes! - Charlie Pyne from North London. Forgive the slight delay, but it's been nearly six years since her debut, during which time motherhood has no doubt played its part in keeping her out of the spotlight.

Playing the bass and singing at the same time is not easy: you're usually producing one note on the instrument while singing a different one, and that can be confusing, which is why we don't see it done that often. Two cases in point: the syncopated samba 'KP's Parrot' (presumably a glimpse into the home life of the band's Canadian drummer) and the opener 'On the Shore'. During both, Pyne handles the complicated melody lines alongside the tenor with no apparent effort.

There's a pleasing lightness of touch on this collection of all-original tunes, recorded with the same lineup as before. In fact Pyne seems able to carry the whole thing off with aplomb, aided by Pinkstone's fluent reed contributions and Dunachie's always reliable ivories. The mood is sunny and upbeat throughout, even on the slow tune 'Gratitude'. It's all very accomplished, melodic, tasteful and well-recorded. In fact, it don't half remind one of... Esperanza Spalding. Considering the latter's genius, that is surely no bad thing. **Peter Jones**

Album Interview

Ian Shaw & Tony Kofi
An Adventurous Dream - The Music Of Billy Strayhorn And Duke Ellington (At Pizza Express Live in London)

PX Records PXRCD1010 (CD, 2 LP, DL) ★★★★

Ian Shaw (v), Tony Kofi (as), Barry Green (p) and Dave Green (b). Rec. date not stated

It's fascinating to compare this powerful collaboration, and it is a real double header with Kofi and Shaw sharing credits, with Dave Douglas' *Gifts*. Douglas likewise visits Ellington material with a special focus on Strayhorn songs. But he consciously eschews saxophone on the Strayhorn material. In contrast, Kofi and Shaw celebrate the vibrant relationship between Johnny Hodges' alto, Strayhorn's material and the elusive magus who brought them together, Duke Ellington.

Kofi is an assured stylist: his *Another Kind of Soul* was a brilliant evocation of altoist Cannonball Adderley while his immersion in Strayhorn goes back to 2010 and *Strayhorn the Songwriter* with Alex Webb. As well as singing along with Shaw ("it is like having two singers on stage" notes Ian) whether on an ebullient 'Mood Indigo' or merging deliciously into Barry Green's to die for piano intro to 'Day Dream', Kofi also has two solo features of his own.

On 'Isfahan' Kofi's sensual edge stills the clatter of knife on china that is implicit to a live at the Pizza Express recording. As for 'Blood Count', a composition too deep for tears that even Shaw is rendered silent by, Kofi's sense of loss is countered by his urgent will to live. **Andy Robson**

Andy Robson spoke to Ian Shaw about the new album

This is a stunning partnership with Tony Kofi...
Tony is extraordinary. He's always had that vocal technique which Johnny Hodges had, that sliding up of the note, that ear teasing thing.

I love Iain Ballamy (a long time Shaw collaborator in his trio and the current *Greek Street Friday* band) but I don't feel that with Iain. That's a very different discourse.

And a live release?
It's that 'beautiful passing moment that can never be repeated' vibe. I'm sure you're bolder as a player when you're out of the studio, in front of a crowd, and you may have shared a joke and a drink beforehand.

You're a fantastic storyteller, but there's none of the vibrant intros you usually do?
And there are such stories to tell. Like when Strayhorn goes cruising and ends up on a building site and his ring gets lost, matron, in a sand pit. And Lena Horne goes back and finds the ring while Strayhorn's in hospital having been beaten black and blue for being black and gay.

Most of these songs were written in the late 1930s/40s when Nazis, and others, were exterminating those they considered 'sub-human': blacks, homosexuals, Slavs, as well as Jews.
So those stories matter even more. To an extent Strayhorn was protected by his peers like Lena Horne, Duke himself, but there were thousands like him who were gay, black and were growing up at a time when those things were not hip.

Yet the lyrics, the melodies, are sensual, dark yet gorgeous...
The lyric to 'Lush Life'. My god. 'Life is mush'. But he was obsessed with gardens and beautiful flowers, and references to them pepper the lyric.

And you cover 'Passion Flower' and 'A Flower is a Lovesome Thing.'
It's such a privilege to sing those songs. I did a lyric to 'Blood Count' but it was just too dark. We let Tony take that one! The whole project felt like a real 'no safety net' one, especially with no drums. Dave Green was just beaming from the second we mooted it right through to the final mix.

Why do artists return to these songs?
Well, I've not done 'Something to Live For' before. I love Sarah Vaughan doing it; Cedar Walton always wanted to do it (with me), must've been something that fell easily under his fingers. I've done 'Blood Count' before with Mark Murphy's lyric which is just astonishing. I thought: 'I can't top Mark Murphy!'

Are you conscious of other people's performances when prepping classic material?
That's a very interesting question. I used to be. Now I couldn't give a fuck!

But you care about so much?
I feel I live in a world that's far more accepting of women players. That's a good one for me. And the LBGT aspect of it: I feel completely comfortable now. There might have been an element when I was touring with line ups in my twenties and thirties when some of those guys might have been 'Mmmm, really?!' So that narrative is now okay.

And I'm ever learning. Doing this record was a learning curve. As was my *Greek Street Friday* recording, which is concurrent with this, which is rock and roll. We've gigs for that through the summer. Then there's festivals and we'll concentrate more on the Strayhorn project then.

Marta Sánchez

Marta Sánchez
Perpetual Void

Intakt Records CD421 (CD, DL) ★★★★

Marta Sánchez (p), Christopher Tordini (b) and Savannah Harris (d). Rec. date not stated

New York-based Spanish pianist and composer Sánchez, who's been recently performing with saxophonist David Murray, makes her fifth album (and first for high-quality leftfield Swiss label Intakt). Her previously well-received release *SAAM (Spanish American Art Museum)* from 2022 was for quintet, while this new one is a stripped-down trio with the rather pessimistic title *Perpetual Void*.

The music however is far less so; it has an insistent, probing, inquisitive quality about it. The pointillist-like theme of opening track '29B' shifts into the rising and tumbling waves of Sanchez's otherwise angular piano that artfully navigates the borders of tonality, while the excellent Tordini's bass solo sounds like a variation on a blues riff. '3.30am' reflects the aptly neurotic ticktock of amnesia at that ungodly hour sounding something like a Bad Plus-minded Ethan Iverson theme until Savannah Harris' insistent drum delicately hammers the point home. The 'Black Cyclone' theme bounces irregularly between high and low registers before breaking suddenly into warmer climes with Sanchez showing she can be percussive yet elegantly lyrical in the progressive modal tradition while making wonderful use of space through her solos. 'I don't want to live the wrong life and then die', one of a few titles worthy of a song or poem, balances a New Music-like insistence with post-1960's abstract jazz/improv. Mysterious, understated but insistently percussive and hypnotic, *Perpetual Void* is a pretty rare example of how some of life's tough challenges can be uncovered both positively and meaningfully by open, creative instrumental music. **Selwyn Harris**

Rasmus Sørensen

Traits

April Records 126 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★

Rasmus Sørensen (p), Jon Henriksson (b), and Francesco Ciniglio (d). Rec. date not stated

Balancing Act

April Records 132 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★

Rasmus Sørensen (p), Alexander Claffy (b) and Kendrick Scott (d). Rec. August 2021

A simultaneous release of the 20-something Danish pianist Rasmus Sørensen's debut *Traits* – originally issued as digital download exclusively in Denmark in 2022 – and a brand new recording, *Balancing Act*.

The different line-ups reflect the pianist's geographic whereabouts at the time of recording although more significance and interest lies in the evolution of Sørensen as a pianist, composer and improviser. Having graduated from a Manhattan School of Music scholarship after moving to New York in 2018, Sørensen assembles a tougher New York-based line-up for *Balancing Act,* including the influential drummer-composer Kendrick Scott.

On his debut Sørensen, alongside long-time partners of Paris-based Italian drummer Francesco Ciniglio and Stockholm-based upright bassist Jon Henriksson, sounds like an old soul, with his breezily attractive mainstream Bill Evans-influenced lyricism. He draws on a set of cheery originals drawing from both the American and European acoustic jazz heritages. The Denmark-based trio play with empathy, the mood being mostly lyrically sunny or yearningly melancholic.

But it's noticeable listening to the newer recording that he's yet to cut his teeth. On *Balancing Act* Sørenson showcases major refinements as an interpreter as well as composer. On Coltrane's lesser-known 'Mr Day' the pianist builds up a head of steam without revealing much of a spiritual connection with the original, while the take on pianist Duke Pearson's 'Is That So?' is more suited to the trio's effortlessly cool swing. *Balancing Act* is still temperament-wise like *Traits*, but solos are more airy, considered, and possesses all the elements that a well-drilled New York jazz apprenticeship can bring. Being by a relative newcomer, the recording also doesn't overstay its welcome, being about half the length of *Traits*.

A promising new piano voice then, with *Balancing Act* being the most enjoyable as well as accomplished of the pair of new releases. **Selwyn Harris**

Omar Sosa
Omar Sosa's 88 Well Tuned Drums

Otá LPOTA1035C (LP, DL) ★★★★

Omar Sosa (p, el p), Tim Eriksen (v), David Gilmore, Marvin Sewell (g), NDR Big Band, Peter Afelbaum (as), Sheldon Brown (s), Joo Kraus (t), Leandro Saint-Hill (c), Ingmar Heller (b), Gustavo Ovalles (guirro, bv), Martha Galarraga (clave, bv), Moulay M'Hamed Enneji Fakikhan (guembri, qarqabas), Childo Tomas (b), Roman Diaz, Marcio Doctor, Pedro Martinez, Adam Rudolph (perc), Marque Gilmore, Elliott Kavee and Ernesto Simpson (d). Rec. 2022

The soundtrack of the multi-award-winning 2022 documentary by filmmaker Soren Sorensen, *Omar Sosa's 88 Well Tuned Drums* further supports the director's premise - that the Cuban pianist approaches the 88 keys of the piano with a percussive flair which, while bold and soulful, is never at the expense of dynamics, sensitivity or indeed, the artist's palpable humanity. A priest of the syncretic Santeria religion as well as a seven-time Grammy nominee, Barcelona-based Sosa channels his onstage charisma and finger-tip inventiveness into building bridges between ancestral rhythms and free-flowing jazz.

He's said that jazz as a philosophy represents freedom, helps him find truth in storytelling. This eight-track album cherry-picks music from eight albums including *Across the Divide* (2009) and *Eggün* (2013), and features star turns by the likes of Germany's progressive NDR Big Band (on the rollicking 'Cha Cha Du Nord') and US-born vocalist/ethnomusicologist Tim Ericksen, singing from deep inside the song/prayer that is 'Promised Land' - which Sosa, playing live, often uses as a tribute to Elegua, the Santeria *orisha*-deity who opens the way. The thudding *guembri* bass and clattering qarqabas castanets of Morocco are laced throughout 'Trodanzøn', a track piqued by Sosa's appearances at the Gnawa festival in Essaouira, and further evidence of his drive to find links, pick up narrative threads. A 'Best Of' compilation, then - and a testament to a wildly impressive creative mind. **Jane Cornwell**

Jamil Sherriff's Five Gold Rings
Red Kite

Lamplight Social Records LSRDL28 (DL) ★★★

Jamil Sherriff (p), Jim Corry (as), Richard Iles (flhn), Sam Quintana (b) and Caroline Boaden (d). Rec. date not stated

Jamil Sherriff has exerted a mighty influence for good on the UK scene in his role as jazz programme leader at Leeds Conservatoire: here he continues the good work in the company of a cohort of his fellow lecturers. Lest this sound a bit dryly academic, we should hasten to add that not only are all of them terrific players, but they genuinely cohere as a unit.

All 10 compositions are by Sherriff in a range of contemporary idioms which showcase his band's empathy, and the frontline of alto sax and flugelhorn is conducive to a poised introspection that matches the carefully arranged tunes.

Drummer Caroline Boaden

Omar Sosa

kicks up the dust on 'Healing' in company with Sam Quintanta's warm, solid bass - 'Love Someone' has a sunny insouciant West Coast vibe that belies the complexity of its twisty lines - 'Going To Church' has a more urgent, modal flavour - 'Speed Awareness' has an angularity reminiscent of late 1960s Jackie McLean which is always a good thing; and the trades between Richard Iles and Jim Corry demonstrate how well matched they are in fluent accuracy and inventiveness.

The leader's comping is a model of supportive restraint and his solos all display a thoughtful melodic approach underscored by his thorough command of language - dig his John Taylor-ish intro on 'Spiralling Into Control' . Entirely delightful - the model of a great band playing great tunes with flair and evident enjoyment.

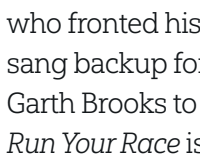
Eddie Myer

Kandace Springs
Run Your Race

SRP Records (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Kandace Springs (v, p, ky) plus various personnel. Rec. date not stated



A tribute to her late father, the Nashville soul singer Kenneth 'Scat' Springs, who fronted his own band and sang backup for everyone from Garth Brooks to Aretha Franklin, *Run Your Race* is the first album from Kandace Springs to feature almost all original songs. The plaintive title track is a soul-stirring reflection on navigating the bittersweet journey of bidding farewell while clinging to the essence of a cherished father-daughter bond. Co-composed for the *Barbie* soundtrack by Billie Eilish and her brother and long-time collaborator Finneas O'Connell, Springs presents a jazz-infused take on the Grammy and Oscar-winning ballad 'What Was I Made For?'

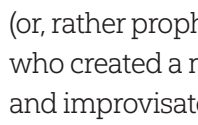
Famously championed by Nina Simone, the classic 'Wild Is The Wind' holds a special place in Springs' heart, a song which her father introduced to his daughter during her formative years and a testament to the enduring power of shared musical legacies. Other highlights include the head-nodding groove of 'Pulse', the pure intimacy and tender confession of 'Look' (co-written with her father) which features Springs accompanying herself on Fender Rhodes, plus the touching ballad 'If I Had My Way'. With *Run Your Race*, Springs not only honours the legacy of her beloved father but also invites listeners on a heartfelt journey of love, loss and the unwavering power of music to heal the soul. **Peter Quinn**

Fay Victor & Herbie Nichols Sung
Life Is Funny That Way

TAO Forms TAO15 (2 CD, 2 LP, DL)

★★★★

Fay Victor (v), Michael Attias (as, bs), Anthony Coleman (p), Ratzo Harris (b) and Tom Rainey (d). Rec. 2023



New York based-vocalist Fay Victor has been making excellent music for the best part of three decades, both as leader and collaborator with the likes of William Parker, and her work has been marked by a daringly consistent originality. *Life Is Funny That Way* could well be a career highlight insofar as it shows how she can be herself while thoroughly living within the world of another.

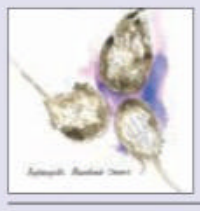
This celebration of Herbie Nichols sees Victor put lyrics to the compositions of the influential (or, rather prophetic) 1950s pianist who created a melodic, harmonic and improvisatory landscape that had the most beautifully strange, stimulating contours. Victor, with her strong but supple tone, and delivery that can veer from sentimentality to irony in a beat, is more than up to the task. Her ability to blur scat and written lines, giving each piece a wonderfully loose, ambling feel, is imperious, supported by a stellar band that can swing as effectively as it fragments rhythm and fractures groove.

Alto-baritone saxophonist Michael Attias proves an excellent frontline partner to Victor, who captures and conveys all the wry, weary bluesiness and pithy imagination of singers who are indirectly connected to Nichols. Billie Holiday's 'Lady Sings The Blues' was reprised by the pianist, and it is also re-arranged here in suitably plaintive fashion while one of Lady Day's most notable successors, Abbey Lincoln is like a wandering spirit throughout the album. Every track is notable but 'Sinners All Of Us' is particularly strong for the leftfield gospel resonances. Victor is a contemporary improviser and singer of the highest order and this work shows that her ability to walk the tight rope between avant-garde and mainstream has now pushed her to a creative peak.

Kevin Le Gendre

Kandace Springs

Play to Wien...



Anthropods
Abundant Shores

Klanggalerie GG469 (CD, DL) ★★★

Mark Holub (d), Irene Kepl (v), Clemens Sainitzer (clo), Susanna Gartmayer (bcl) and Jakob Gnigler (ts). Rec. date not stated

Blueblut
Lutebulb

Janka Industries JI004 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

Pamelia Stickney (Theremin, v), Chris Janka (g, loop, samples), Mark Holub (d, perc, v). Rec. date not stated

Two Vienna-based bands, each featuring Led Bib drummer Mark Holub– but that's about it for commonalities. Acoustic quintet Anthropods was Holub's lockdown project bringing together elements of neo-classical composition with vigorous elements of improvisation.

Sophomore album *Abundant Shores* was conceived as a single continuous suite of eight 'pieces', a sequence of passages flowing and swerving through unstructured bursts to sudden tight rhythmic or melodic themes. At one point a kind of randomised canon is tossed between instruments using a variety of speeds and keys and there's even a (sort of) groove number, albeit one that staggers and starts again. The emphasis is on texture and there is a sonic consistency emanating from the characterful instrumentation and playing. As drummer Holub provides the defining commentary throughout and the piece arcs gently to an unexpectedly tidy resolution. It's satisfyingly serious music that is, nevertheless, an entertaining listen.

Blueblut's fifth album *Lutebulb*, however, is seriously entertaining from its jaunty cartoonish start. The band have been working together for a decade, latterly with Chris Janka's automaton MIDI Orchestra, but this trio album sees them enjoying getting back to basics. The 14-minute marathon 'Arrobark' manages to cram a history of prog-rock references into a loping Afro-Latin number that goes cosmic, melts down and then roars back with Rage Against The Machine-like intensity punctuated by an intentionally annoying barking dog. Each of *Lutebulb*'s six tracks mixes improvising energy with absolute precision, many held down by Pamelia Stickney's amazing Theremin bass lines and there's even an infuriatingly catchy earworm as 'Aumba''s crescendo has Holub singing a charming Anglo-Austrian song about getting lost. The Blueblut trio clearly love playing together and they'll take a good idea wherever it comes from.

As a result *Lutebulb* shimmers with creativity while delivering a satisfying dollop of knowingly musical fun. **Tony Benjamin**

Kamasi Washington
Fearless Movement

Young YO350 (2 CD, 2 LP, DL) ★★★

Kamasi Washington (ts), DJ Battlecat, Brandon Coleman (ky), Terrace Martin (as), George Clinton, D Smoke, BJ The Chicago Kid, Patrice Quinn (v), Taj Ras Austin (rap), Andre 3000 (f), Thundercat (el b) and Ronald Bruner Jr (d). Rec. 2023

As the figurehead of the contemporary West Coast scene that achieved worldwide exposure on the back of his 2015 set *The Epic*, Kamasi Washington generates expectation with every release.

After a run of consistently good albums he ups the ante with what could be the best since his debut. Although not overly guest-heavy, the set counts appearance by the likes of P-Funk legend George Clinton, newbie BJ The Chicago Kid and versatile multi-instrumentalist Terrace Martin.

Crucially, their respective inputs do not make the music too disparate, as can sometimes be the case when there are features galore. The distinct theme here is dance and the overriding ensemble sound is pitched in an interesting space between lyrical jazz that occasionally leans to African traditions, as in the opener 'Lesanu', which is based on Ethiopian devotional chants, and the soulful funk that is integral to black America.

A wily re-harmonisation of Zapp's electro-groove classic 'Computer Love' is a welcome curveball; but elsewhere the syncopation that gives the songs a stimulating flow of energy suits their predominantly spiritual subtext. While Washington solos with customary verve, it is the well-executed ensemble vocal choruses that stand out as they cleverly echo legends such as Leon Thomas, Pharoah Sanders and Sun Ra. Although not radically overhauling his sound, Washington nonetheless shows the kind of creative maturity that stands him in good stead for the next stage of his career.

Kevin Le Gendre

Dan Weiss
Even Odds

Cygnus Recordings CR104 (CD, DL)

★★★★

Dan Weiss (d), Miguel Zenón (as) and Matt Mitchell (p). Rec: Sept 2023

The innovative American percussionist/composer Dan Weiss has long been making absorbing jazz out of composing group music from drum patterns outwards. *Even Odds* now deploys those methods in even bolder ways.

Weiss divides 20 short episodes here between six relatively conventionally-written pieces inviting improv variations from virtuosic Latin/bop saxist Miguel Zenón and awesomely eloquent Tim Berne piano *protegé* Matt Mitchell, and 14 fragmentary game-like challenges (the press release calls them 'rhythmic dares') pre-recorded by Weiss at the drums, and then spontaneously reacted to by his partners. Zenón snaps out short, staccato chatters, spurring torrential Mitchell rejoinders, against Weiss's rhythmic fusillades on the opening 'What It Is', while the gracefully mournful 'The Children of Uvalde' (a response to the 2022 US school shooting) is a more songlike piece evoking a soft piano sway under lyrical long-tone sax swoops.

'Horizontal Lifestyle' and 'Vertical Lifestyle' compare what happens in this creative lineup when the first is only a glinting, murmuring sax/piano dialogue without the drum part that originally impelled it, while the latter brings all three components together. 'Bu' is a skimming, boppish tribute to Art Blakey, and 'Itirefen' is a trio genuflection to Wayne Shorter - it's 'Nefertiti' spelled backwards, and cherishes that classic in its edgily lyrical, slowly-tolling pulsations, tender sax sighs and soft piano chords.

The Japanese zero-sum game of 'Scissors, paper, rock' is pictured on the cover of *Even Odds*, and with good reason: the musicianly game-lover Weiss keeps making unique contemporary sounds from the creative vicissitudes of mixing planning, intuition, and chance. **John Fordham**

Shortcuts: New Releases

BIGHEADMODE
Return! Of The Hellcat

Self-release ★★★

Multi-instrumentalist brothers Ewan and Robbie Moore's highly listenable debut album explores scuffed-up 1970s funk and fusion grooves. Replete with shuffling break beats and melodic lofi keys, the fired-up playing propels this above similar Spotify-friendly jazz releases. **(MF)**

Brian Bromberg
LaFaro

Be Squared Productions ★★★

Bass maestro Bromberg leads an all-acoustic salute to the genius of Scott LaFaro and his masterful innovations with Bill Evans. Bromberg's commanding central performance is note-perfect, but the trio lack the interactive frisson of the original. **(MF)**

Satoko Fujii Tokyo Trio
Jet Black

Libra Records ★★★★

In cohorts with bassist Takashi Sugawa and drummer Ittetsu Takemura, the great Japanese pianist has created a powerful acoustic trio album for the 20th century. Unselfishly, Fujii takes something of a back seat here, allowing her *simpatico* accompanists to shine on a selection of six brand-new compositions. Splendid stuff. **(KW)**

Remy Le Boeuf's Assembly of Shadows
Heartland Radio

SoundSpore Records ★★

The saxophonist/composer imagines this muscular Snarky Puppy-esque jazz fusion set as his own personal road trip soundtrack. Big, slick and technically adept, fans of horn-heavy grooves will love it, others may balk at the drivetime four-to-the-floor dance beats. **(MF)**

David Leon
Bird's Eye

Pyroclastic Records ★★★

Multi-instrumentalist (soprano and alto saxophones, alto flute, piccolo) Leon's latest, made in cahoots with DoYeon Kim (gayagum, voice) and percussionist Lesley Mok, is an intriguing, angular (but still accessible) mash-up of Afro-Cuban and Korean musics that rewards repeated listening. **(KW)**

Klemens Marktl
Xperience

ATS Records ★★★

Austrian drummer-composer Marktl's trio hooks up with in-demand NYC saxophonist Tim Armacost (terrific throughout) for a straightahead, swinging session of original compositions that will put a smile on your face and get your foot tapping. **(KW)**

Riley Mulherkar
Riley

Westerlies Records ★★★★

Trumpeter Mulherkar is best known as a member of NYC-based brass quartet The Westerlies. On this beautifully-produced record, his breathy, Miles-ish tones are framed in a variety of settings, from solo ('Chicken Coop Blues') to full-blown, swinging band sessions, on both original compositions (the gorgeous, spacey 'Looking Up') and standards from Gershwin, Morton and Carmichael. **(KW)**

On a Limb
When The Skies Parted

Honestly Records ★★★★

A little gem of a trio album from this Cincinnati-formed, NYC based band. Combining effortless chemistry and Mehldau-esque folk-tinged warmth, pianist Andrew Haug, bassist Ethan Marsh and drummer Charlie Schefft are on to something very good indeed. **(MF)**

Tina Schlieske
The Good Life

Shifting Paradigm ★★★

Minneapolis rock singer Schlieske's first album of jazz standards (the title track, 'Witchcraft', 'My Baby Just Cares For Me' etc) works pretty well. It doesn't offer anything startlingly original, but this is an entertaining, likeable session thanks to stellar backing from the cream of the Twin Cities' jazz talent. **(KW)**

Small Blue
The Stealthy Moon

Self-release/Bandcamp ★★★★

Led by drummer-composer Martin Pyne, this UK trio (also featuring David Beebee on piano and Marianne Windham on bass) creates a hugely enjoyable selection of swinging, intimate originals for their debut album. There's more than a hint of Duke Ellington here, and that of course is no bad thing. A very promising start. **(KW)**

Sunny Five
Candid

Intakt ★★★

Five of the most prominent voices on the New York jazz scene – Tim Berne, David Torn, Marc Ducret, Devin Hoff and Ches Smith – convene for an improvised, jam-y session that mixes acoustic and electronic sounds. Given that none of these players could be described as shrinking violets, the results are surprisingly and satisfyingly coherent, the artists playing with, as opposed to against, each other. **(KW)**

Curtis Taylor
Taylor Made

Curtis Taylor Music ★★★

Long a popular sideman (Gregory Porter, Ed Motta, Patrice Rushen and scores of others), trumpeter Taylor's first full-length album as a leader is a likeable affair, on which his expressive, almost gospel-y horn playing is fleshed out by some impressive writing from the man himself, and a rock-solid group drawn from the cream of Mid-Western jazz talent. **(KW)**

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PX RECORDS

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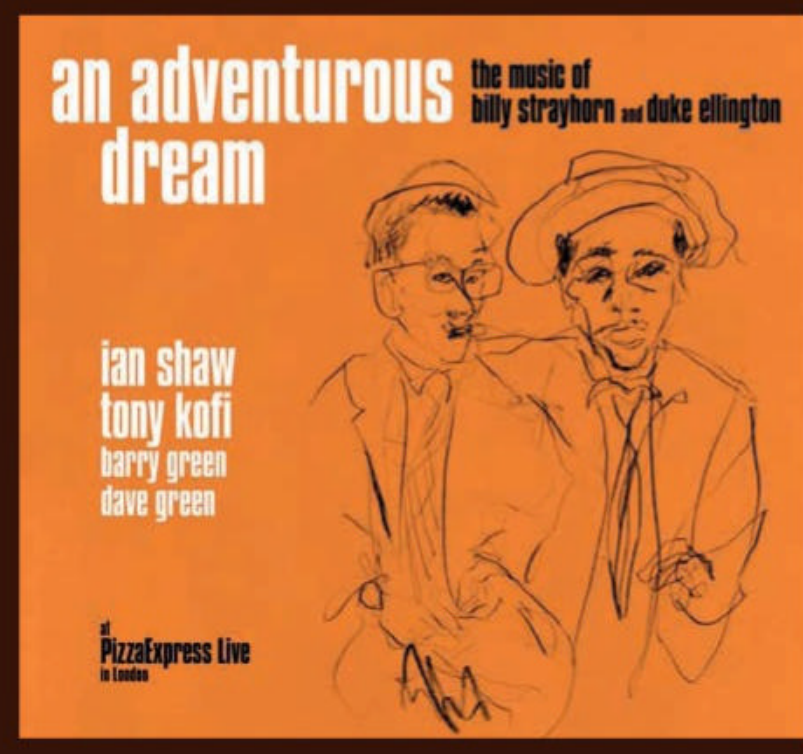
IAN SHAW & TONY KOFI

An Adventurous Dream – at PizzaExpress Live in London is relasesed via PX Records on April 26th 2024.



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Albums: Reissues/Archive

★★★★★ Landmark Recording ★★★★ Excellent ★★★ Good ★★ Average ★ Disappointing

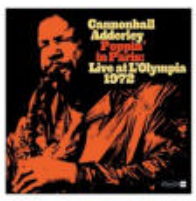
Cannonball Adderley

Burnin' in Bordeaux: Live in France 1969

Elemental 5990448 (2CD, 2LP) ★★★★

RECORD STORE DAY (RSD) RELEASE

Cannonball Adderley (as), Nat Adderley (cl), Joe Zawinul (p, ky), Victor Gaskin (b) and Roy McCurdy (d). Rec.14 March 1969



Poppin' in Paris: Live at L'Olympia 1972

Elemental 5990449 (2 CD, 2LP) ★★★★ RSD RELEASE

Cannonball Adderley (as, ss), Nat Adderley (cnt), George Duke (p, ky), Walter Booker (b) and Roy McCurdy (d). Rec. 25 October 1972

The Adderley brothers stayed true to each other, touring and recording together as a quintet under Cannonball's leadership until his untimely death at the age of 46 in 1975, a mere three years after the second of these concert recordings.

As with all these 'new-find' Elemental albums, sound quality, provenance, and presentational content are of a high order, as is the music, albeit that the rhythm teams each assert themselves differently. McCurdy's clamorous drumming is a constant as is the avuncular presence of Cannonball himself, the warmth of his personality evident in his likeable announcements.

The playing in Bordeaux is certainly spirited, the alto and cornet on the opening 'The Scavenger' by Zawinul quite wild and fragmented, the aura of the late Davis quintets immediately evident . 'La Manha de Carnival' is quieter, Zawinul eloquent behind the senior Adderley. 'Work Song' is more familiar surely, well, no, not in this energised version, McCurdy kicking hard, Nat pushing himself.

So, no easy run-throughs here, even as Bernstein's 'Somewhere' is taken as an alto ballad and is quite tender, Gaskin arco. Thereafter the repertoire covers funk, bebop, and the blues, Zawinul's immortal 'Mercy, Mercy, Mercy' a standout, with its composer sonorous on electric piano, the group funkier yet on the pianist's 'The Scene'.

By Paris in 1972, pianists and bassists had changed, as had some of the repertoire. The 20-minute version of George Duke's 'Black Messiah' opens with its composer ruminating at the piano before going electric, *à la* Miles again, sound washes heralding the horns and their ensemble riff. And again, this apparent tilt at fusion is followed by a standard, 'Autumn Leaves,' for 13 minutes, with Nat lyrical at first, Cannonball slithering here and there, McCurdy clattering, electric piano bubbling under, before Nat returns, his runs and upper register forays quite startling, Duke back again on keyboard ahead of McCurdy's long solo and Nat's final flourish. As with Bordeaux, 'M,M,M' was played again as was the groovy 'Walk Tall' with its catchy riff, and Duke's prowling keyboard.

These audiences clearly relished everything; and given its quality and the quintet's importance, it's good that this music is now available. Producer Zev Feldman says that he knows that portions of these concert recordings (first made by ORTF) have appeared via irregular sources, but he now has the agreement of the Adderley Estate to their first official release in this complete form. He badges them as 'Deluxe Limited Editions' and indeed they are. **Peter Vacher**

Art Ensemble Of Chicago

A Jackson In Your House

BYG Actuel 529302 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★

Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman (as, ss, cl, f, marimba, perc), Lester Bowie (t, flhn, perc) and Malachi Favors (b, perc, v). Rec. 1969

Part of the historic wave of American expatriates who took the avant-garde to Paris at the end of the 1960s, Art Ensemble Of Chicago made several outstanding albums for the BYG label, notably *A Message To Our Folks* and this one, *A Jackson In Your House*. One could provocatively call the band 'the other great quartet' insofar as the four-piece made unforgettable music that defied the prevailing convention of the small group featuring drums and piano.

With Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman on reeds, Lester Bowie on brass and Malachi Favors on bass, the band is as arrestingly potent as it is soothingly tender. While they are first and foremost musicians, the players created something that is very much akin to a theatre piece or radio drama, with the passages of spoken word, poetry and zany character voices investing the work with a loose stagey energy.

A composition such as 'Get In Line', a playful dart thrown at military monotony, is a highlight, but the vast array of instruments deployed by the band almost make it an orchestra split into small units that amount to a cumulative tower of sound. Drummer-less but hardly percussive-less the music has raging torrents of momentum and a still water introspection that reflect the way Art Ensemble Of Chicago drew from all areas of black history as well as music to create something unique. *A Jackson In Your House*, for its humour and high art, is a timeless work. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Chet Baker and Jack Sheldon

In Perfect Harmony: The Lost Album

Jazz Detective DDJD 016 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★ RSD RELEASE

Chet Baker, Jack Sheldon (t, v), Dave Frishberg (p), Jack Marshall (g), Joe Mondragon (b) and Nick Ceroli (d). Rec. 1972

Several biographical accounts date Chet Baker's return to playing, after the 1966 assault that cost him his front teeth, to 1973 when he moved to New York. In fact, as James Gavin's biography points out, he'd been sporadically attempting to return to playing for three years before that, at a subtle under-the-radar level, including the best-forgotten 1970 album *Blood, Chet and Tears*. This discovery of a tape, preserved by guitarist, record producer and arranger Jack Marshall's family, shows that Chet had made huge progress the year before he travelled East.

He had long been friends with trumpeter, studio musician and erstwhile TV star Jack Sheldon, and it was Jack who convened this band of sympathetic musicians to accompany them playing and singing. Chet's trumpet makes some measured, tasteful appearances, showing his embouchure was returning, but it's as a singer he really imposes his musical personality here. The

Art Ensemble of Chicago

A mighty Confirmation of Byas!

Don Byas
Classic Don Byas Sessions 1944-1946

Mosaic MD10-277 (10 CD) ★★★★★

Don Byas (ts), Hot Lips Page (t,v), Charlie Shavers, Emmett Berry, Jesse Brown, Joe Keyes, Shad Collins, Frankie Newton, Dizzy Gillespie, Bill Coleman, Benny Harris, Joe Thomas, William Johnson, Talib Dawud, Felix Barboza, Loyal Walker, Dick Vance, Buck Clayton, Roger Jones, Joe Newman, Shorty Rogers, Neil Hefti, Harold 'Money' Johnson, Henry Glover (t), Trummy Young, Vic Dickenson, Benny Morton, Tyree Glenn, Alton 'Slim' Moore, Shorty Haughton, George Washington, JJ Johnson, Henry Wells, JC Higginbotham, Sandy Williams, Claude Jones, Dicky Wells, Charles Johnson, Al Grey, Henderson Chambers (tb), Tony Scott, Eddie Barefield (cl, as), Hank D'Amico (cl), Floyd 'Horsecollar' Williams, George Johnson, Rudy Williams, Earl Bostic, Kirt Bradford, Charlie Parker, Johnny Bothwell, Porter Kilbert, Jewel Grant, Bill Stegmeyer, Jimmy Powell, Russell Procope, Burnie Peacock (as), Ernie Caceres, Budd Johnson (as, ts), Benny Carter (as, t), Ike Quebec, Gene Sedric, Lucky Thompson, Coleman Hawkins, Harold Clark, Ben Webster, Hal Singer, Walter 'Foots' Thomas, Flip Phillips, Dexter Gordon (ts), Serge Chaloff, Willard Brown (bs), Red Norvo (vb), Clyde Hart (p, clo), Johnny Guarnieri, Dave Rivera, Jimmy Jones, John Mehegan, Teddy Wilson, Joe Turner, John Levy, Sammy Benskin, Teddy Brannon, Thelonious Monk, Bill Clifton, Nat Jaffe, Pete Johnson, Rufus Webster, Kenny Watts, Sammy Price, Cyril Haynes, Frank Froeba, Ken Kersey, Errol Garner, Gene Schroeder, Ed Finkel, Sonny White, Bill Wyatt, Sanford Gold, Beryl Booker (p), Merle Pitt (clo), Al Casey, Tiny Grimes, Remo Palmieri, Harold McFadden, Herb Ellis, Mike Bryan, Leonard Ware, Herman Mitchell, Tony Guttoso, Freddie Green (g), John Simmons, Billy Taylor Sr, Slam Stewart, Milt Hinton, Al Lucas, Sid Weiss, Ted Sturgis, Al Hall, Bob Haggart, Oscar Pettiford, Charlie Drayton, John Levy, Leo Guarnieri, Eddie Safranski , Dick Kissinger, Frank Skeete, Leonard Gaskin (b), Sid Catlett, Cozy Cole, Jack Parker, JC Heard, Specs Powell, Doc West, Max Roach, Slick Jones, Denzil Best, Jimmy Crawford, Buford Oliver, Johnny Blowers, Fred Radcliff (d), Inez Cavanaugh, Nita Bradley, Kenneth Jackman, Rubberlegs Williams, Joe Turner, Albinia Jones, Ann Hathaway, George Williams and Rubel Blakey (v).
Rec. 14 June 1944- 7 September 1946

Considering Don Byas' place in the tenor scheme of things, the *Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD* is unequivocal: "Byas dominates the strip of turf between Coleman Hawkins and Charlie Parker"; before reflecting: "Hard these days to recognise just how highly regarded Byas once was until one actually hears him".

It is the special merit of this latest Mosaic wonder-box that it addresses and reinforces both these pronouncements. It supports (through booklet essayist Loren Schoenberg's expert testimony) the critical placement of Byas as a significant tenor-saxophone innovator.

Its sheer range (10 carefully curated CDs), then allows the present-day listener to catch up and marvel at Byas' assured playing. What better way, then, to fully realise his importance? Add to their customary largesse, the usual Mosaic qualities – peerless recorded sound, keen-eyed research, and provenance, and of course, durability, and you have yet another Mosaic prize eminently worth pursuing.

Photo: Disques Blue Star/JJ Archive

Carlos Wesley 'Don' Byas was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1913 and took to music early on, settling on the alto saxophone and by the late 1920s, had hooked up with his fellow-townsman, pianist Jay McShann, playing and traveling locally. Having subbed in various touring orchestras, he entered Langstone University in 1930 and there ran his own band, Don Carlos and His Collegiate Ramblers with considerable success.

A tenor adoptee, three years later he was on the West Coast with Lionel Hampton's band and encountered pianist Art Tatum, saying: 'That's where I got my style from. I just blow, like Art. Art really turned me on. That's when doors opened up for me music-wise". By 1937, Byas was in New York working his way through a series of top big bands, eventually joining Count Basie in January 1941. In November 1943 he moved over to the early bebop band led by Dizzy Gillespie and Oscar Pettiford at the Onyx on 52nd Street, ready and able to espouse the modernist cause.

Thereafter he was seldom out of the studios for long, connecting with every player of consequence, swing or bebop-inclined, Mosaic's collection covering some 50 such sessions, the first three CDs collecting those made for Savoy, National and Majestic, with a further four devoted to the rarely heard private recordings (false starts and all) set up by Timme RosenKrantz , the Danish aristocrat and Byas supporter, the remainder from miscellaneous labels, with alternative takes run at the end of each CD.

So, a mass of music to absorb from this 21-month period, producer Scott Wenzel explaining that a further 13 sessions from 1944-46 that might have been considered are owned elsewhere. Initially a Hawkins man, by this time Byas was 'widely recognised as the prime tenor player of the period', according to *Jazzwise*'s Brian Priestley, his massive tone, seamless facility, and harmonic nous shining through every track. Sumptuous on ballads and imperious when required, Byas kept the best of company, straddling the swing style of trumpeters Page and Shavers, and the more advanced concepts of Gillespie and Parker (teamed here with Byas for the immortal Rubberlegs Williams session) with insouciant aplomb.

By 1946, he had settled in Europe, embarking on another kind of career altogether. But that's a different story.

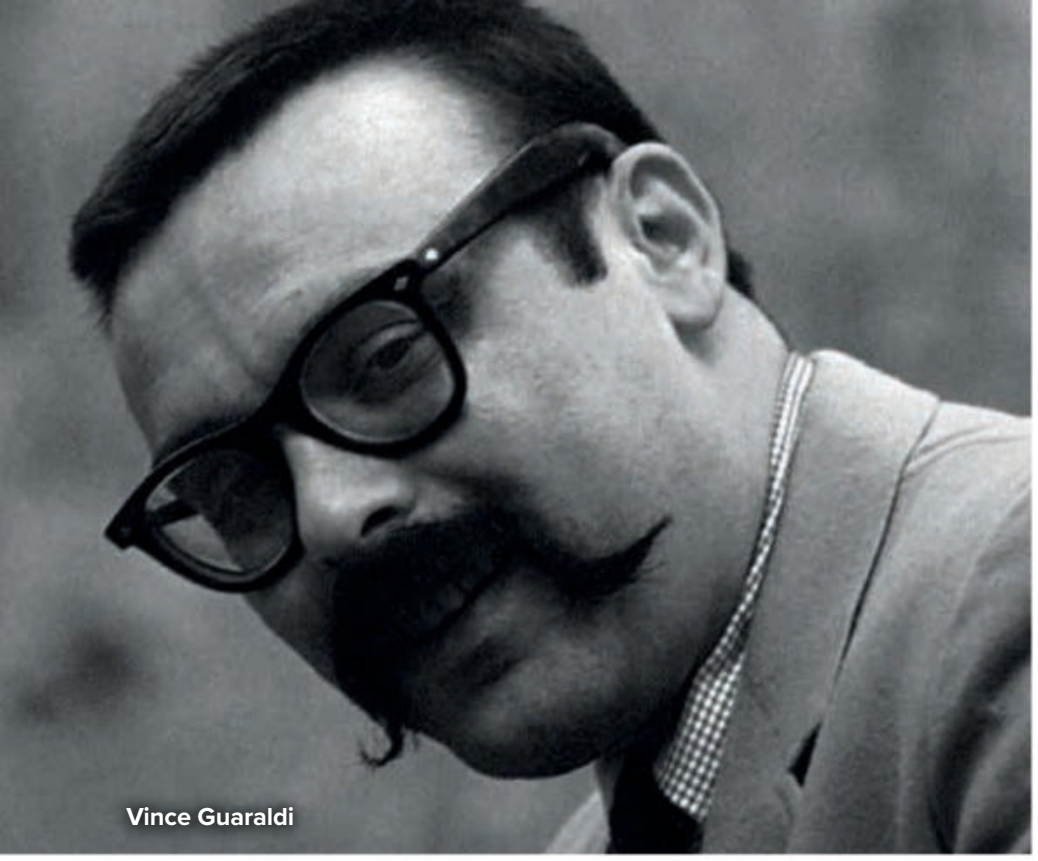
Peter Vacher

extended ending to 'But Not For Me' is a classic series of vocalised trumpet phrases, which Sheldon's horn deftly accompanies. And Chet inhabits some of the lyrics with the same fragile yet doughty persona that made his 1950s quartets so popular, particularly 'Just Friends'. Sheldon's trumpet there, and elsewhere, is brash and confident, but thankfully never overshadows his friend and fellow front-line player.

When Sheldon sings, Chet sometimes shadows him on the horn, or takes short but lyrical solos, notably backing up Jack's Spanish lyrics on 'Historia de un Amor' and both introducing and accompanying Sheldon's singing on his composition 'Too Blue'.

But for Chet fans, his voice and trumpet on 'When I Fall In Love' is a harbinger of the best that was still to come in the 16 years left to him. And for those who only know Dave Frishberg as a songwriter, singer and occasional pianist, this album shows what a perfect backing player he was, given a roomful of sympthetic colleagues.

Alyn Shipton


Vince Guaraldi

Art Farmer
Portrait of Art Farmer
Contemporary/Craft Recordings
CR00605 (LP, DL) ★★★★

Art Farmer (t), Hank Jones (p), Addison Farmer (b) and Roy Haynes (d). Rec. April–May 1958

Although he'd honed his bop chops with the likes of Wardell Gray and Dexter Gordon, served time in the R&B prison ship that was Lionel Hampton's orchestra, and etched out Hard Bop history with Horace Silver's quintet, there was always something of the introspective about Art Farmer.

In the mid-1960s his quartet with Jim Hall made some of the most affecting music ever set to disc in the name of jazz, but even earlier Farmer's mellow-toned trumpet had seemed best suited to situations where considered swing rather than fevered extroversion was the rule. His 1958/59 stint with Gerry Mulligan found him filling the cool school footwear previously occupied by Chet Baker with ease and this release, a reissue of his sole outing for the iconic West Coast Contemporary imprint, taped just before he joined Mulligan, captures his quiet, detailed but free-wheeling style to a T.

A year earlier, Farmer's frequent playing partner tenor saxophonist Benny Golson had also made a rare 'East Coast' outing on the same label ('New York Scene') which might almost be a primer for this set, delivering jazz pitched somewhere between the steam-grate energy of the Jazz Messengers and the menthol-tipped sounds then coming from California.

Framed by a rhythm section to die for, Farmer outlines a careful programme mixing unscripted blues with the work of favoured colleagues (George Russell and Golson) and, best of all, three Great American Songbook themes that fairly glow.

Indeed, in his patient, dryly romantic reading of 'The Very Thought of You' Farmer reveals the key to his playing, selling you a melody almost done to death at the hands of others as if it were fresh-minted. And – no surprise here – Jones and Haynes, old-headed pros that they were, read him like a book.

The 1950s were an especially rich time for jazz trumpet and there are no shortage of souvenirs from this era – everyone from Braff to Brown were setting down classics on disc – but this thoughtful, gentlemanly album is up there with the very best, making its considerable points with poise, class, taste and pace. In beautifully remastered sound, this is a real keeper. **Simon Spillett**

Vince Guaraldi
It Was a Short Summer, Charlie Brown
LFMP 245502 (2 LP) ★★★
RSD RELEASE

Vince Guaraldi (p), Pete Candoli, Conte Candoli (t), Frank Rosolino (tb), William Hood, Peter Christlieb (reeds), Herb Ellis (g), Monty Budwig (b), Jack Sperling (d) and Victor Feldman (perc). Rec: 1969

The thing about movie or TV music cues is that they are usually rather short, and the segments of Vince Guaraldi's score for this 1969 Charlie Brown TV special are musical miniatures – the longest here stretching barely beyond two minutes.

That said, the chance to hear his music for *Peanuts* in a larger ensemble than his previous trio recordings, and the presence of some of Hollywood's finest studio and session players, makes this quite a plateful of tiny treats. Even a minuscule cue, such as the minute-long 'Linus and Lucy' has some fine flute soloing over the rhythm section with punctuations and long chords from the band.

To make a virtue of brevity, Lee Mendelson Film Productions have elected to issue this on a 12-inch 45rpm green vinyl disc for Record Store Day. As Charlie Brown and friends face off against the gang led by Peppermint Patty (whose track features baritone sax and Victor Feldman's vibes) Guaraldi's music, as ever, catches nuances of the characters, which we hear right from the get-go with the enlarged ensemble playing the Charlie Brown theme.

Those of us fascinated by the evolution of film scores will love the extra tracks giving us alternative versions of several pieces, plus a brief rehearsal take of the opening theme. I rather suspect this will mainly appeal to *Peanuts* fanatics, but there's some fine playing here by a great cast of musical characters to complement Schulz's visual ones.

The most effervescent playing is in the reprise of 'You're In Love, Charlie Brown', with great solos from Feldman on vibes, Herb Ellis and Guaraldi himself, which encapsulate this slightly strange album's constant feel-good factor. **Simon Spillett**

Yusef Lateef
Atlantis Lullaby
The Concert From Avignon
Elemental 5990450 (2CD, 2 LP, DL)
★★★★ RSD RELEASE

Yusef Lateef (ts, ss, f), Kenny Barron (p), Bob Cunningham (b) and Albert 'Tootie' Heath (d). Rec. 1972

Although Yusef Lateef is one of the undisputed pioneers of 'eastern sounds' he also had deep roots in the blues, gospel and swing. This previously unreleased recording of a 1972 concert performed in Avignon, France makes that clear in no uncertain terms, as the Detroit reed master is largely in a more straightahead vein than on some of his acclaimed 1960s releases, above all *The Centaur And The Phoenix*.

A superb quartet sees the drums and bass axis of Tootie Heath and Bob Cunningham provide strength and agility while pianist Kenny Barron is an eloquent and expressive accompanist and soloist.

However, Lateef lords it, particularly on tenor saxophone, from which he draws a big, bulbous, tone *á la* Ben Webster all the while being able to run lightning quick changes like the best beboppers. The performance has a stylistic breadth that takes the band beyond easy categorisation. Indeed the quartet is compelling on the rollicking R&B of 'Yusef's Mood', an epic juggernaut of a tune in which Lateef goes full-on gutbucket while Barron is as inventive as he is energetic, spicing a lengthy whirling solo with a brilliant quote of 'Blues In The Closet'. In contrast there are moments that only Lateef could conceive of, such as the deeply mystical atmosphere of 'Lowland Lullaby', a fine duet by Cunningham and Heath, who also takes a sly left turn to play Indian flute.

As the band members attest in the expansive CD booklet it was totally in Lateef's nature to encourage this kind of experimentation. With both inspiring words and music, this is an excellent release that adds to our understanding of a man who is a quintessential, still largely unheralded figure in modern music. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Yusuf Lateef

Sun Ra

At The Showcase: Live in Chicago 1976-77

Jazz Detective DDJD-013 (2 CD, 2 LP, DL) ★★★★ RSD RELEASE

Sun Ra (p, ky), John Gilmore (ts), Marshall Allen (as, f, kora), Danny Davis (as, f), Eloe Omoe (as, bcl), Danny Thompson (bs, f), Michael Ray, Ahmed Abdullah, Emmett McDonald (t), Vincent Chancey (frhn), Dale Williams (g), Richard Williams (b), Luqman Ali (d), Eddie Thomas (perc), James Jacson (ob, infinity drum), Atakatune (cga), June Tyson, Wisteria and Cheryl Banks-Smith (v).
Rec. 21 February 1976, 4 and 10 November 1977

Pink Elephants On Parade

Modern Harmonic MH-8304 (LP) ★★★★ RSD RELEASE

Sun Ra (p, ky), June Tyson (v) and uncredited musicians. Rec. 1985-90

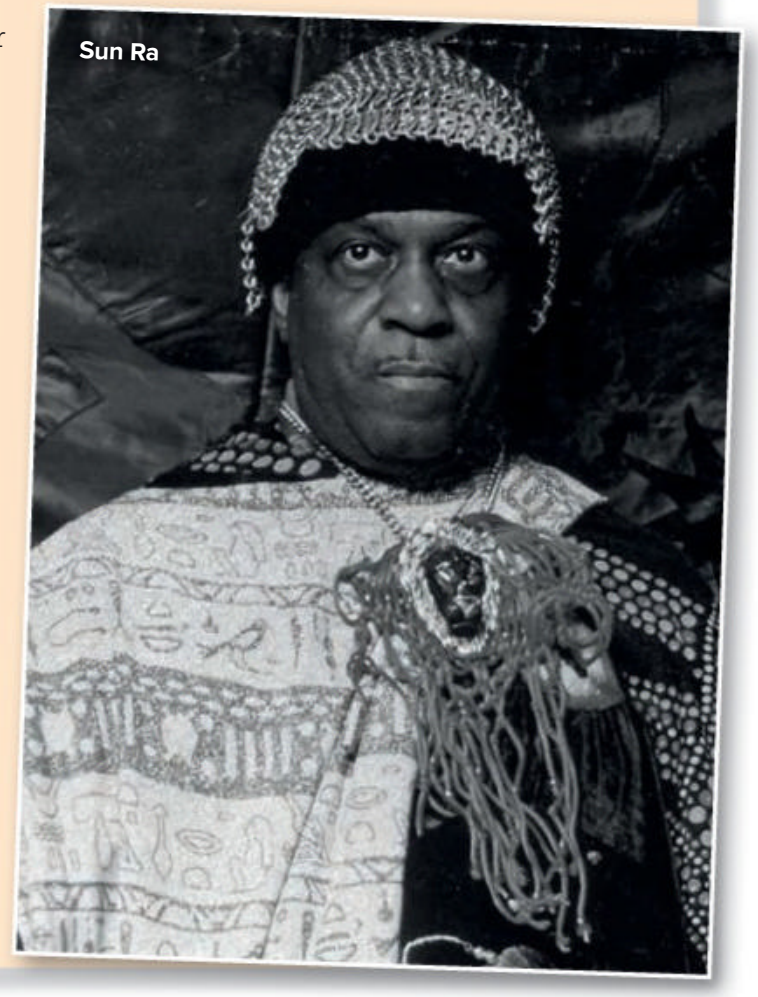
Two very different Record Store Day releases from the Saturnic Mr Ra, both featuring previously unheard music and both revealing divergent sides of this multi-faceted artist.

At The Showcase er, showcases three storming gigs at Joe Segal's famous Chicago venue The Showcase. As you'd expect, these are freewheeling performances, perpetually teetering on the edge of chaos, with only the will and gravitational pull of Ra, plus the aggregate skill of his musicians, preventing a collapse into entropy. Highlights of a 10-song (plus numerous announcements and spoken word interludes) set are the 18-minute 'Calling Planet Earth & The Shadow World' and a 10-minute 'View From Another Dimension'. This is Ra and the Arkestra at their most cosmic, with an emphasis on individual expression, improvisation and sonic texture, rather than collective swing. Add in a superb booklet featuring illuminating liner notes plus interviews with the likes of Marshall Allen, Michael Anderson, Jack DeJohnette, David Murray, Reggie Workman and others, and previously unpublished photos from the actual gigs, and you have a winning package.

Pink Elephants – pressed on pink vinyl, natch – is a rather different beast. It consists of live material culled from the archives, recorded at different times with different bands; what unites every tune is that it has a Walt Disney connection (the title track is the music which accompanies a trippy scene from the animated classic *Dumbo* wherein the intoxicated titular elephant and his buddy Timothy Q Mouse hallucinate wildly). Who knew that our astral traveller had such a soft spot for Disney movies?

The thing is, as bizarre as the idea of a figure as cosmically out there as Sun Ra tackling the likes of 'Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah' and 'Some Day My Prince Will Come' is, it actually works, and works really, *really* well, transcending mere novelty. I was surprised at just how seamlessly Ra and his Arkestra put their own unique twist on the seven songs, all of them recontextualised as hard-swinging Afrofuturist jazz.

Thus 'Whistle While You Work' becomes a pulsating horns-keys workout full of forward momentun and rich with infectious, polyphonic call-and-response vox. It's absolutely brilliant. The cacophony of horns and percussion on the title track resemble a marching band, but the tune is given a kind of demented grandeur by the crazed vocal lines. 'Some Day My Prince Will Come' is by contrast taken straight and it swings like a bastard, June Tyson's heartfelt vocals the icing on the cake. The 10-minute 'Second Star to the Right' (*Peter Pan*) features some of the most assertive Ra piano/keys playing I've ever heard and 'Forest of No Return' (from the 1961 live-action flick *Babes In Toyland*) is plain weird and – appropriately enough – rather creepy. Finally, the Sherman brothers' 'Let's Go Fly A Kite' (*Mary Poppins*) sees Ra and the crew gleefully jazzifying the galaxy and the jubilant, percussion-laden 'Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah' round out an always surprising, joyous and fun collection which will win over even ardent Sun Ra sceptics. **Kevin Whitlock**



Sun Ra

Johnny Lytle

The Loop

Tuba Records/BGP HIQLP115 (LP, DL) ★★★

Johnny Lytle (vb), Wynton Kelly (p), Milt Harris (org), George Duvivier (b), Peppy Hinant (d) and Willie Rodriguez (perc).
Rec. 1965-66

People & Love

Milestone/Jazz Dispensary Top Shelf Series CR00653 (LP, DL) ★★★★

Johnny Lytle (vb), Marvin Cabell (ts, f, af), Dahhoud Hadi (p, el p, org) Bob Cranshaw (el b), Jozell Carter (d), Arthur Jenkins, Willie Rodriguez (perc) and Betty Glamann (hp).
Rec. 1972

Johnny Lytle remains a relatively unheralded figure in the jazz vibraphone pantheon but on the strength of these two fine albums he more than deserves pride of place. The Ohio native had an eloquent timbre, and moved seamlessly between darting rhythmic drive and melodic finesse. He also had killer tunes.

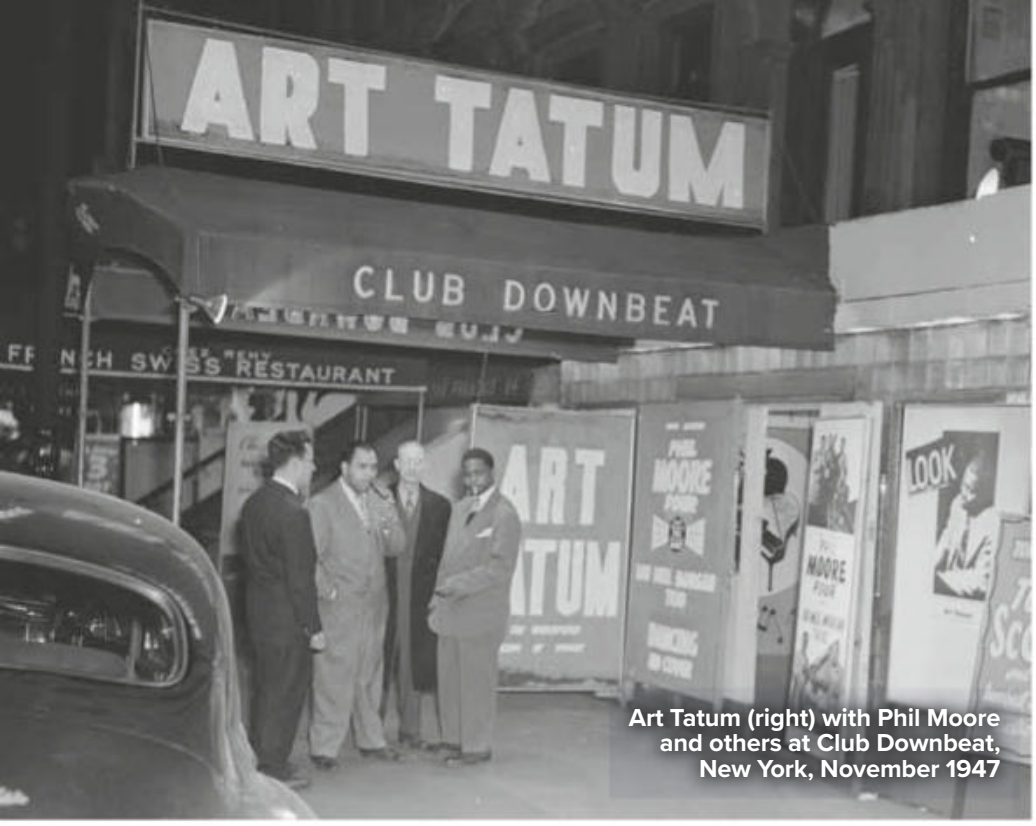
1966's *The Loop* shows how well Lytle could use sprightly Latin grooves, blues riffs and standards in an acoustic setting that benefits decisively from Willie Rodriguez's congas, above all on the infectious title track.

From 1972, *People & Love* is an altogether funkier, heavier affair that has a distinctly spaced-out, pyschedelic flavour at times, thanks to a band that is well anchored by Bob Cranshaw's brawny electric bass.

While the originals such as 'Libra' have a winning blend of fraught themes and moody harmony thanks to the striking blend of Dahoud Aadi's Fender Rhodes and Betty Glamann's spooky harp glissandos it is the magnificent version of 'People Make The World Go Round' that steals the show. Another vibes star, Milt Jackson, also covered the tune excellently, but Lytle takes the piece to dizzy creative heights by way of a central vamp section built on an ominous march beat and some wonderfully tasty licks from all members of the rhythm section.

Not for nothing was Lytle known as the 'soulful rebel.' His music had a lot of feeling as well as a hard edge that would make the hip-hop generation reach for its samplers and drum machines if they were lucky enough to find his vinyl nuggets. With that in mind, these handsomely packaged reissues are most welcome. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Johnny Lytle



Art Tatum (right) with Phil Moore and others at Club Downbeat, New York, November 1947

Photo: William Gottlieb/Library of Congress

Sun Ra
Inside The Light World: Sun Ra Meets the OVC

Strut STRUT288 (CD, 2 LP) ★★★★

Sun Ra (p, syn), John Gilmore (ts, perc, voc), Danny Ray Thompson (bar s, perc), Marshall Allen (as, fl, perc), Al Evans (flhn), Fred Adams (t), Tyrone Hill (tb), Eloe Omoe (bcl), James Jacson (bn, Infinity-drum), Bruce Edwards (el g), John Ore (b), John Brown (d), Atakatune (conga, perc) and June Tyson (v). Rec. 25 August 1986

The quality of this previously unheard session from 1986 – in terms of repertoire, performance and production – is so high that it's hard to believe it was never intended for release.

It captures a meeting, both improbable and inevitable, between the great Sun Ra (plus 13-piece Arkestra) and *bona fide* rocket scientist Bill Sebastien, the inventor of the Outer Space Visual Communicator – or OVC. A fractal light projector 'played' with a keyboard, the OVC could be manipulated in real time to accompany performers on stage but, here, the encounter takes place in a 24-track studio.

Obviously, we can't hear Sebastien's visual extemporisations, but we can clearly discern Ra's reactions, as he leans heavily on the synth to create astral washes and cosmic winds. In other ways, though, it's a pretty conventional session, and a great summary of what a live Arkestra show would have been like in the mid-1980s: a complete absence of free-jazz turbulence in favour of tuneful favourites such as 'El Is a Sound of Joy,' plenty of call-and-response vocal sermons, and even saxophonist John Gilmore's cheesy croon through the standard 'East of the Sun.'

It's a laid-back and slightly rambling date, but filled with enough highlights for even the most demanding Ra-ficionado.

Daniel Spicer

Art Tatum
Jewels in the Treasure Box: The 1953 Chicago Blue Note Jazz Club Recordings

Resonance HLP-9064 (2 CD 3 LP, DL)

★★★★ RSD RELEASE

Art Tatum (p), Everett Barksdale (g) and Slam Stewart (b). Rec. March 1953

According to his biographer James Lester, it was around the time of this recording that Tatum heard from his doctor that he was fatally ill, with the kidney complaint that killed him just over three years later.

There's no hint here of a man on borrowed time, and indeed Tatum had yet to embark on the remarkable series of solo and small group recordings for Norman Granz that he made during the final three years of his life. This latest discovery by the indefatigable Zev Feldman catches Tatum's regular working trio on the road, as it had been for the previous two years or so. Slam Stewart had worked with the pianist in the 1940s, and knew exactly how to fit with Tatum, his arco solos across the 37 of the 39 tracks here being as good as any he ever recorded.

There had earlier been other guitar players in the trio, but here Everett Barksdale works alongside Tatum with the same aplomb as his predecessor Tiny Grimes, his solos working up a head of steam over Tatum's (sometimes dazzlingly busy) accompaniments. Dashing tempi hold no terrors for this group, whether it's a hell-for-leather 'Sunny Side of the Street', one of the fastest 'Soft Winds' I've ever heard, or a well-worn jam session vehicle such as 'Flyin' Home.' Of course audiences wanted to hear this fleet-fingered player at his impressive best and this Chicago crowd are never disappointed.

But the barnstorming numbers are balanced by ballads, and more introspective fare. Perhaps the best moment is when Tatum asks the crowd for silence as he plays a solo, and while they shush one another he launches into a virtuoso series of cadenzas introducing 'Someone To Watch Over Me', which settles into a medium tempo version, punctuated by his characteristic runs, some of which reharmonise on the go, but, as well as returning to the original key and tempo, hold today's listeners on the edge of our seats, just as they did for the crowd in Chicago all those years ago. And he keeps us there with a return exploration of his 1940 solo Decca version of Massenet's 'Elegie', but this time, after the semi-classical introduction, its extended stride centrepiece is even more breathtaking. **Alyn Shipton**

Various Artists
Inspiring Elvis: The Music Behind The King of Rock and Roll

Upbeat URCD338 (CD) ★★★★

Tracks by Pine Top Smith; Ray Charles; Big Joe Turner & Pete Johnson; Golden Gate Quartet; Josh White; Fats Waller; Sister Rosetta Tharpe; Mahalia Jackson; Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band; Ethel Waters; Memphis Minnie; Dinah Washington; Louis Jordan; Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup; Wynonie Harris; T-Bone Walker; Amos Milburn; Big Mama Thornton; Rufus Thomas; The Tempo Toppers; Little Richard; Hot Lips Page; Big Joe Turner. Rec.1929; 1933; 1936; 1937; 1938; 1939; 1943;1946; 1947; 1948; 1952; 1954

We can't be sure that Elvis knew and was influenced by *all* these African American artists and their recordings, but it's a reasonable bet that he knew many of them.

Anyway, that's the premise of compiler John Petters' fascinating selection. His booklet spells it out well and it seems entirely reasonable to suggest that Tupelo-born Elvis absorbed much of what is on offer here via the many and varied regional radio outlets then around. We do know that Sam Phillips heard Elvis singing bluesman Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup's 'That's All Right Mama' during a break in his self-financed demo session in Memphis' Sun studios in 1954 and knew that he had a hit in the making. Let's hope Crudup benefited too. Big Mama Thornton's Hound Dog' (written by Leiber and Stoller) doubtless had the same impact- not so sure about Rufus Thomas' 'Bear Cat' which Phillips put out to counter Elvis, only to find himself in a lawsuit for copyright infringement.

Anyway, all these tracks are here and pretty rumbustious they are.

Opening with Smith's 1929 'Pine Top's Boogie Woogie' with its invitation to 'mess around' was a master-stroke, Petters maintaining that this amalgam of 'jazz, blues, gospel, and boogie started here. From then, it's a heady mix of Big Joe Turner in stentorian form – his seminal 'Shake,

She influenced Elvis: Dinah Washington

Rattle and Roll' comes last, Ethel Waters upholding her faith with 'The Crucifixion,' Kid Ory doing 'Joshua Fit The Battle of Jericho,' The Golden Gate Quartet with the chugging 'Gospel Train and Harris's marvellous 'There's Good Rockin' Tonight', plus plenty more. Treat this collection as a kind of compendium of influences, some direct, others less so, but each one a part of the glorious palimpsest of rock and roll. **Peter Vacher**

Mal Waldron
Four Classic Albums

Avid Jazz AMSC1446 (2 CD) ★★★★

Mal Waldron (p), Bill Hardman, Idrees Sulieman (t), Jackie McLean, Gigi Gryce (as), John Coltrane (ts), Sahib Shihab (bar s), Julian Euell, Addison Farmer (b), Art Taylor, Ed Thigpen, Al Dreares, Arthur Edgehill and Kenny Dennis (d). Rec. 9 November 1956, 19 April, 17 May 1957, 26 September 1958, 24 February 1959

New Yorker Waldron (1925-2002) had a two-part career. Initially, he worked in and around NYC with some of the leading jazz modernists – including Charles Mingus – and was Bille Holiday's accompanist until her death. He recorded regularly for Prestige as a both sideman and leader and it is from this label that Avid have culled three of his albums, *Mal-1*, *Mal-2*, *Mal-4* plus *Left Alone* from Bethlehem. Later he relocated to Europe, ending up in Brussels.

Mal-2, which comes first, is an amalgam of two sessions, one for standards, the other for Waldron's originals, with Coltrane a constant. 'From This Moment On' is given quite a shake-up, Coltrane in exhilarating form, trumpeter Sulieman slightly tentative, Waldron displaying both his Monk-ian propensity for repeated, percussive figures and Powell-ish fluency.

For the curiously-named and ethereal 'JM's Dream Doll,' a dedication apparently to McLean and his wife, Hardman is on trumpet, his playing crisper, Waldron spare, Coltrane more-than-usually restrained, McLean Bird-like in his eloquence. Waldron excels on 'The Way You Look Tonight,' driving hard while the minor-key 'One By One' is intriguing in the sparsity of its theme, but enlivened by Sulieman's strongest solo. If the full-of-vim Coltrane, inevitably, is the standout overall, Sulieman emerges well too.

Left Alone follows, Waldron's trio augmented by McLean for the title track only, its elegiac quality well conveyed by McLean's plaintive sound. Waldron's 'Catwalk' is harmonically simple yet deceptive, its intriguing structure explained in Ira Gitler's informative note and underlining just how concerned Waldron was with distinctive thematic concepts.

This is especially evident on his 'Minor Pulsation,' heavily drum-oriented. CD2 opens with *Mal-1*, Sulieman accompanied this time by Gryce, the quintet hewing closer to conventional hard bop expectations as on the opening 'Stablemates', Golson's ever-engaging tune prompting pleasingly spacious solo work from Gryce and Sulieman, Euell and Edgehill truly on song.

Mal-4 from 1958, was a trio album, with the short-lived Farmer superb on bass and again mixes old and new, Waldron continuing to offer surprises. His decision to leave the New York hot-house may have reduced his status in the eyes of some. Avid's compilation is a welcome reminder of just how foolish such opinions were. **Peter Vacher**

Mal Waldron / Steve Lacy
The Mighty Warriors

Elemental Music 50990446 (2 CD, DL)

★★★★ RSD RELEASE

Steve Lacy (ss), Mal Waldron (p), Reggie Workman (b) and Andrew Cyrille (d). Rec. 30 September 1995

In their duo concerts, Mal Waldron and Steve Lacy trod a fine line between the interpretation of Thelonious Monk's music, true to its melodic and metrical structure, and far freer fare. This Antwerp event, planned to celebrate Mal's 70th birthday (which occurred the previous month), finds them charting a similar course in an all-star quartet format.

A brief and beautiful rendition of 'Epistrophy' sits at the artistic core of the album (released on vinyl for Record Store Day and CD thereafter) and there's an almost 13 minute version of 'Monk's Dream' that's notable for a dazzlingly brilliant drum solo from Andrew Cyrille which manages to keep the theme in our minds percussively, throughout his variations, until an anguished grunt or scream from the drum stool, and a recap of the introductory rhythm, brings the band back in.

Mal Waldron

Photo: ECM Archive

Linking the two Monk interpretations is Steve Lacy's 'Longing' which is a free-form piece, but it seems an absolutely logical extension of the thinking behind the quartet's treatment of Monk. Reggie Workman's 'Variation of III' is the most abstract piece here, with an arco solo ushering in the others by turns, with some fine soprano from Lacy. The set is book-ended by Waldron's compositions, and the closing 'Snake Out' – a forceful low register piano theme that leads into a tumbling piano and soprano head – is intertwined with Mal's 'Variations on a Theme by Cecil Taylor' containing a long, pensive and beautiful unaccompanied piano solo that must rank as some of the finest late-period Waldron on record. Congratulations to Zev Feldman for a characteristically thorough, first-rate production and to Barney Wilen's son Patrick for preserving the tapes. **Alyn Shipton**

Bobby Wellins Quartet
What Was Happening

Jazz In Britain JIB-33-S-CD (2CD, DL)

★★★★

Bobby Wellins (ts), Pete Jacobsen (p, el p, org), Adrian Kendon (b) and Spike Wells (d). Rec. 19 January 1978–15 July 1979

There's a perception that Bobby Wellins' contribution to jazz is becoming restricted to his solo on 'Starless And Bible Black' from Stan Tracey's *Under Milk Wood* suite. The present expanded reissue is a forceful reminder that there was much more to him, in terms of his original writing and his unique sound when improvising.

He's occasionally been compared to Johnny Griffin for his fluency, but Wellins' instrumental tone is more like a Scottish equivalent to Jan Garbarek, although a decade older, and ostensibly closer to the tradition.

Recorded within an 18-month period when Wellins' career was resurgent after years of addiction problems, the material is centred around two now hard-to-find LPs, the live *Jubilation* and its studio follow-up *Dreams Are Free*, both consisting entirely of the tenorman's compositions - the title track of the former bears no relation to the Junior Mance standard. These were both produced and released by bassist-administrator Kendon, whose playing worked well with the now equally senior Wells. The youngest member of the band, blind pianist Jacobsen, sadly died in 2002 and is not only ripe for rediscovery; but is inventive in solo and creative in backing, while a large part of what makes these performances so compelling is the exciting yet supportive drumming of Wells. (Full disclosure: I first met Spike 60 years ago this autumn, and have always admired his playing.)

The bonus tracks, taped by Wells (more than half-an-hour's worth on each CD), include a live set doubtless recorded with a single mike, and with a corresponding diminution of the piano sound and more emphasis on the drums. But Bobby's response to this standard material is even more extraordinary in some ways, including on the better-balanced tranche added to CD2. If the limited edition physical release has sold out by the time you seek it, you may be able to access the music via Bandcamp, and would be well advised to do so. **Brian Priestley**

ECM's Luminessence series continues to dazzle

Jan Garbarek Quartet

Afric Pepperbird

ECM Luminessence 1007 (LP, DL)

★★★★★

Jan Garbarek (ts), Terje Rypdal (g), Arild Andersen (b) and Jon Christensen (d). Rec. September 1970

Keith Jarrett and Jan Garbarek

Luminissence

ECM Luminessence 10049 (LP, DL)

★★★★

Keith Jarrett (comp, arr), Jan Garbarek (ts, ss), Strings of the Sudfunk Symphony Orchestra of Stuttgart and Mladen Gutesha (cond). Rec. 29 and 30 April 1974

John Taylor/Norma Winstone/Kenny Wheeler

Azimuth

ECM Luminessence 1099 (LP, DL)

★★★★★

John Taylor (p), Norma Winstone (v) and Kenny Wheeler (t). Rec. March 1977

I'm sure it has been mentioned before, but this Luminessence series of classic ECM re-releases are actually *better* than the original releases. One reason is that albums originally released in the 1970s and early 1980s were affected by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) petrol bans in 1973 and 1979, which caused a market shortage of vinyl.

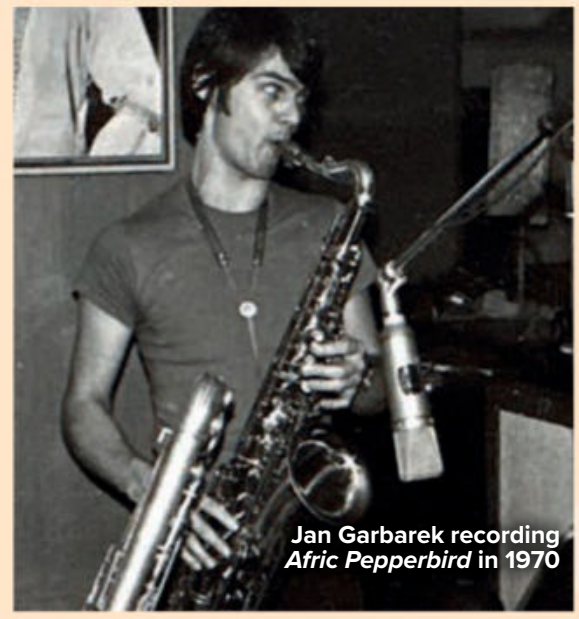
However, ECM somehow managed to maintain its high audio standards (when most of the majors conspicuously did not), albeit some recordings were thinner than these sumptuous 180g vinyl reissues, some of which come in redesigned gatefold album covers, and many with valuable liner notes added by Steve Lake (again, most of the originals did not come with this).

The star of this batch of re-releases is the Jan Garbarek Quartet's *Afric Pepperbird* from 1970. It is numbered ECM 1007, and was the seventh ECM album ever released (preceded only by Mal Waldron, an ECM *Just Music* album, Paul Bley, Marion Brown, Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, and Wolfgang Dauner titles). It is an album of enormous significance, first because here was a recording that captured something of a 'European approach to jazz', and more particularly a 'Nordic approach'.

Secondly, Eicher sent Keith Jarrett a copy of the album as an example of the artistic direction he saw the label following; this act played a role in the pianist coming to ECM. The remarkable thing about *Afric Pepperbird* is its timelessness. The mutually inspirational interaction of the musicians, all familiar with each other's playing since their teens, drives the music to an exceptionally high level of creativity – despite the studio being situated next to a lift shaft which meant recording that had to cease when the lift was in use!

Garbarek and Jarrett held each other's playing in high regard, prompting Jarrett to compose 'Music for String Orchestra and Saxophone Composed by Keith Jarrett', with the Strings of the Sudfunk Symphony Orchestra of Stuttgart, conducted by Mladen Gutesha on the album *Luminessence*. Remarkably, it was recorded in the same week (April 1974) as *Belonging*, the now legendary debut of what became known as Jarrett's 'European Quartet'. Key to Garbarek's performances on *Luminessence* is the way in which he is completely at one with the composer's intent, structuring his solos around the needs of each composition, while finding a voice within it that did not alter its meaning. It is a remarkable album and a considerable achievement by two young men, Jarrett then 28 and Garbarek 27.

Although *Azimuth* – by John Taylor, his then wife Norma Winstone and their close friend Kenny Wheeler – is seldom celebrated to the extent it should be: it is a pluperfect integration of the monophonic trumpet and voice with the polyphonic piano in spontaneously conceived episodes that then produced something new and fresh in jazz. A meeting of acute musical minds still widely admired throughout the world of jazz it is, like *Afric Pepperbird* and *Luminessence*, a classic album, each one an essential in any contemporary collection of jazz recordings. **Stuart Nicholson**



Jan Garbarek recording *Afric Pepperbird* in 1970

Photo: Arild Andersen

Zzebra

Hungry Horse (Live in Germany 1975)

MiG Music 00832 (CD) ★★★★

Alan Marshall (v), Lasisi Amao (ts, v, perc), Dave Quincy (ts, f) Steve Byrd (g), Tommy Eyre (ky, v), John McCoy (b) and Liam Genockey (d). Rec. 20 October 1975

Watch out! There's a Zzebra crossing. But where we are going, we don't need roads... or warning signs. Just prick up your ears and keep alert for some exciting music performed by a remarkable band on these recently-discovered, stellar live recordings.

Zzebra was born with two zeds (better than one) in 1973 in the wake of earlier jazz and Afro rock groups such as If and Osibisa.

The original Zzebra lineup included guitarist Terry Smith and saxophonist Dave Quincy, both If veterans; together with Gus Yeadon on vocals and keyboards. With Loughty Lasisi Amao on sax, vocals and percussion and stalwarts John McCoy and Liam Genockey providing the rhythm engine, they made two studio albums for Polydor.

When Yeadon left he was replaced by Tommy Eyre, previously with Joe Cocker and Aynsley Dunbar's Retaliation to complete the now revitalised group along with singer Alan Marshall. Meanwhile Terry Smith was replaced by Steve Byrd and this is the team captured here, during a broadcast by Radio Bremen in 1975.

Dave Quincy says he was amazed on hearing this CD for the first time: "I can only describe it as Heavy Metal Jazz Rock!" It certainly catches electric fire in the first bars of 'Panic' when Loughty's Afro percussion matches the drive of Liam's Irish powered drums. Steve Byrd flies free as a bird during his guitar battle with Quincy's sax and Tommy's electrifying keyboards.

What set Zzebra apart from similar combos, is they were well-rehearsed, and the soloists knew how to improvise without resorting to out of tune screeching. Alan sings with marshalled authority on the funky 'Mr J' and during the sombre 'No Point' composed by John McCoy. The Righteous Brothers' 'You've Lost That Loving Feeling' becomes a splendid feature for Quincy's tasteful soprano sax and 18 year old Steve's impressive guitar solo while 'The Poverty Song' veers towards Stax thanks to Liam and Loughty's funky groove. 'Liamo' has the Afro-Rock explosive force of Ginger Baker's Airforce and on percussion-rich numbers like 'Society' the drummers scream while they play. It all reaches a frenzied climax with 'Hungry Horse' greeted by much deserved applause.

It's a shame Zzebra aren't around today. They'd be a huge sensation at Ronnie Scott's. Alas, Loughty died in tragic circumstances in 1988, Tommy Eyre passed way in 2001 and Steve Byrd in 2016. But thankfully, *Hungry Horse* nags at our memories with a stable diet of pure jazz-rock at its best. **Chris Welch**

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Books

The Notebooks of Sonny Rollins

Edited by Sam VH Reese

New York Review Books PB £16.99

Hard on the heels of Aidan Levy's gargantuan (and at 784 pages, somewhat indigestible) biography of Sonny Rollins, comes this more slender, but equally rich, insight into the great saxophonist's life.

Beginning in 1959 at the time of his self-imposed break from public performance and practice sessions on Williamsburg Bridge, Rollins started to jot down his thoughts on a regular basis and several boxes of these jottings are in his archive at the New York Public Library.

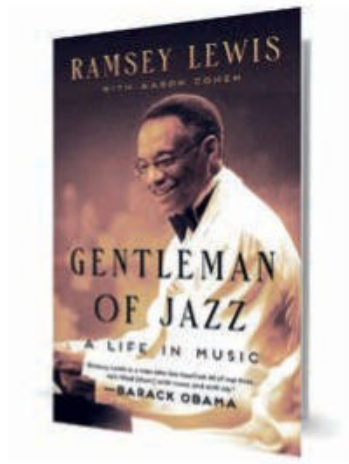
Although, in this distillation from them, the subject matter roams far and wide, as would be the case with anyone noting their daily thoughts, some key themes emerge.

There is plenty of material about the saxophone – practice regimes, fingering, and (most notably) breathing – but there are other continuous threads, from diet and exercise to the determination and single-mindedness required to refrain from tobacco and other stimulants. What is fascinating is the juxtaposition of thoughts, so we find his plans to adhere for a while to a 'strictly liquid diet' sitting between musings on a practice regime where fingering, breathing and embouchure should be mastered to the extent they allow the mind to be 'free to think' and a note about how to retrain the little finger of his left hand to execute a downward run from B to B flat to C more effectively.

Then there are specific observations of self-improvement, such as a week at Philadelphia's Showboat club in 1963, which finds Rollins experimenting with playing an upper melody line and simultaneously accompanying himself by 'playing and moving figures' below it.

He relates that an early attempt 'frightened me off' trying it, until a second go 'proved successful to the degree that an audience reaction was noted, favorably'.

More personal are the notes on the nature of love (and lust), and his reading lists, which mention such diverse authors as Sydney Smith and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Underlying everything is a philosophy of humanity and racial harmony that stresses 'equal opportunity to realize individual potential'. Sonny's musical achievements show the extent to which this has been possible for him, and this fascinating book reveals much of the self-discipline and determination that helped him to achieve it. **Alyn Shipton**



Gentleman Of Jazz

Ramsey Lewis with Aaron Cohen

Black Stone Publishing HB £20.99

When Ramsey Lewis died in September 2022, his passing prompted an outpouring of affection from fans, fellow musicians and the great and the good. Indeed, his autobiography comes garlanded with a blurb from Barack Obama. Highly regarded *and* successful – across the 1960s and 70s Lewis crossed over into the R&B and Pop charts with his funky instrumental jams while many other Lewis cuts would gain a second life once soul jazz DJs began spinning them.

For a child of Chicago's infamous Cabrini Homes housing projects, it appears Lewis lived a blessed life – remaining musically creative for close to 70 years and never waylaid by the problems that befall so many musicians – and here he, alongside a selection of his sidemen, children and second wife, all spell out why Ramsey managed to remain at the top.

Joining seven-piece jazz band The Clefs as pianist aged 17, Lewis instinctively locked in with drummer Redd Holt and bassist Eldee Young. The Korean war stripped The Clefs to a trio and, once told that the trio should be named after the pianist, so it was. He details his dealings with Chess Records, the Chicago and Detroit jazz scenes, backing Lenny Bruce, meeting iconic figures, his voice calm and measured throughout. Maurice White, who replaced Holt on drums, would later play a major role in Lewis' move into jazz-funk and Charles Stepney, the brilliant arranger/producer, who would work closely with Lewis, both get well deserved kudos.

If I have any reservations about Lewis' autobiography, it's how guarded he is – of first wife, Geraldine, who bore him seven children, he says almost nothing. Ditto managers, musicians and labels who surely displeased him at times. This said, Lewis was ailing when he called Aaron Cohen to come and help him write this book so there was little time for anything considered extraneous. **Garth Cartwright**

3 Shades of Blue: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Bill Evans & The Lost Empire of Cool

James Kaplan

Canongate HB £25

The library of literature devoted to the world's biggest-selling and best-known jazz album is substantial, but Kaplan's new book takes a different approach by spotlighting the three key personalities behind the recording, rather than *KoB* itself.

How valuable you find this approach (there's no denying it's a nice idea), and how illuminating you find the book, will of course depend on your depth of knowledge of Davis, Evans and Coltrane.

For 'beginners', or anyone who's just discovered the delights of *Kind of Blue* and wants to find out more about the three men who made it, it works just fine; all the major milestones, stories and biographical touchpoints are present and correct. For most readers of this magazine, however, it won't offer anything new – you're better off reading any one of the many individual biographies of this trio of titans.

On the plus side, Kaplan writes well enough (although his heavy use of colons, semi-colons and long sentences occasionally bogs the narrative down); he ties the lives of the three men together convincingly; he's good at evoking atmosphere; and he gets some new stories from the few associates (particularly of Evans) who are still alive.

On the downside, proof-reading seems to have been completely overlooked – there are so many typos here it becomes tiresome – and Kaplan seems to think *Kind of Blue* was the biographical and musical highlight of the three men's careers. This is odd, considering that after *KoB* was made, Davis went on to create jazz-rock, Trane made *Giant Steps* and *A Love Supreme* and Evans redefined what an acoustic piano trio could do. Furthermore, there's too much focus on the musicians' drug use: surely there's more to Bill Evans than his unfortunate addictions?

If you have a friend or family member who's just got into *Kind Of Blue* and wants to find out more, this will make for a great introduction to three towering jazz figures. The rest of us might find the money's better spent elsewhere. **Kevin Whitlock**

THE PLAYER

SIMON LASKY

The British born, Florida-based pianist and keyboardist **Simon Lasky** – whose new album *For The Dreamers* is out now on Ubuntu Music – spoke to **David Gallant** about his life in music and his favourite gear over the years

"I was never too fussed about the genre," says Lasky. "it was the quality of the music that interested me. All my early musical influences are from the classical world: my aunt is a professional pianist and my piano teacher at Junior Trinity for seven years, Philip Colman, were massive influences. Back then my heroes were always the 'All-Rounders', the musicians who composed, conducted and played the piano: Leonard Bernstein, Andre Previn, Quincy Jones and Thomas Adès."

Lasky grew up in a family embedded in the arts.

"My mum was a professional ballet dancer who studied and taught at the Royal Academy of Dance and was also a member of the Royal Ballet... I think! Though he was born deaf in one ear, dad loved music, played a few chords on the guitar, and could sing you every Beatles song well!"

Lasky began his musical journey on the piano at the age of seven, and recalls his early experiences.

"Initially, piano lessons were with the local piano teacher, Mrs Plowright, at my prep school. As fate would have it, her husband was one of the top Piano Professors at Trinity College of Music in London. One day, when I was 10 years old, I arrived for my piano lesson to see a formidable gentleman (Bob Plowright - Joan Plowright's brother as it happens) in attendance.

"The next week I was invited to audition to Junior Trinity on a scholarship as a Junior Exhibitioner. I attended Junior Trinity studying piano, French horn, composition, musicianship classes, conducting, orchestra, choirs etc... from age 11 to 18. It was amazing. And that was it for me. I *lived* for Saturdays and all I wanted to be was a musician."

Lasky continues: "We did concerts in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Purcell Room, St John's Smith Square – extraordinary opportunities for a teenager. I feel very fortunate that Mrs Plowright saw the potential in me and gave me that opportunity."

> ***"My heroes have always been the musical 'all-rounders'"***

Lasky continued his musical education at Senior Trinity for one year to focus purely on his classical piano playing and composition. Then went on to do a BA (Hons) in Music, followed by a post-grad' in Music for Film & TV at the University of Bristol.

So which pianos has Lasky played over the years, and what is his current set of keys?

"I started with a Welmar upright. Nice, but nothing special. Then mum's sister gave us a really lovely upright with a big sound – I can't remember what it was. Then, when I graduated from university, I had to decide to spend my life savings on either a deposit on a flat or a Yamaha C3 grand piano. I opted for the latter and wrote a lot of chamber and orchestral music on that piano and started to work on my jazz piano skills. I loved that piano."

Today Lasky owns a Yamaha B1 Silent piano: "I love it. They are not expensive, and the way Yamaha marry a high-quality instrument with technological innovation is so clever and perfect for my requirements. It's a fully acoustic piano, but with the flick of a switch you plug headphones in and the piano is silent, except for the headphones. For my small London flat this was hugely valuable; I could compose until the early hours without bothering my neighbours. I brought that piano with me to my flat here in Tampa, Florida."

I wondered what instrument Lasky might request if he was playing in a club or concert hall.

"It would have to be a Yamaha grand C3 or bigger. Their Classic or Concert Grand series are just wonderful. Yamahas are my favourite for jazz. And, for me, I like a heavy action. I need some resistance from the instrument."

Lasky is a regular visitor to the recording studio, and I was keen to know about the mic set up that he and his engineer choose to use: "On the new recording made with a Yamaha Concert Grand, we used a pair of Neumann U87 microphones placed about six inches away from the strings, mid-string. My engineer placed them far enough from the strings and hammers to get a natural sound. We barely had to do any work on the piano sound in the mix."

Very much an acoustic piano man, then, but I also wondered whether he owns any electronic keyboards or synthesisers.

"Yes," comes the immediate response."I have a Roland Stage Piano (FP series) and a Yamaha Reface CP (which I trigger from my Stage Piano) for really authentic Wurlitzer, Fender Rhodes and CP sounds and effects. Yamaha's entire Reface series is terrific."

After what seems like a lifetime on the keys, what does Lasky find so compelling and satisfying about his instrument?

"The matrix is laid out in front of you. It's all there for you to see. I can see and hear any combination of notes that I can imagine. I think that's why, as piano players, we can become obsessed with harmony - it's all laid out in front of us to explore. I could have 10 lifetimes and still continue to learn and discover new things."

Photo: Jayne Drooger

Instrument News & Reviews

David Gallant and **Mike Flynn** review the latest instruments, music and software for professional and serious amateur musicians

Casio PX-S6000 Electric Piano/Keyboard

Casio has come a very long way with the development of its keyboards in the last 20 or so years. Time was when Casio's keyboards were seen as being no more than a toy; yet today, one of their latest portable instruments, the PX-S6000 reviewed here, is comparable to similarly spec'd models from the likes of Yamaha, Korg and Roland.

Well-built and reasonably light at 14.5kg, we should first say that the PX-S6000 does not come with a weighted keyboard action. but rather what we believe to be a sprung mechanism. The keys themselves have solid sides and do not have that glazed sheen of plastic. Casio have gone for a modern, mainly touch sensitive control panel/ system, but have stayed with the more traditional physical control for the volume and expression wheel and three other small assignable controls. There are sadly only three variations of one piano for the instrument's main sound, but these are truly excellent samples. As is always the way with electronic keyboards, there are many other less well sampled sounds that give the player a multitude of creative options; and these are typically comparable with most sample sets currently available on similar instruments. If you need quality sampled sounds for what might be described as 'difficult instruments', you have to go down a completely different route: for example we've only ever heard one saxophone sample that is anywhere near sounding like the real thing. And that cost over £2,000 for the set!

With the PX-S6000 Casio have come up with a cost-effective instrument (albeit one with an RRP of £1,499) that is very responsive on all levels, with a good action and a great piano sound. In our opinion it's perfect for home and small ensemble work – but what it is not, is a stage piano suitable for large shows and big gigs. **(DG)**
www.casio.co.uk/emi

Hal Leonard *Blues Classics* Blues Play-Along

With so many small music venues in the UK being forced to close their doors, it seems an opportune moment to look at the Blues play-along series that brings that much loved band jam into your own home.

Coming with a CD of full backing tracks and split tracks (allowing the player to remove their instrument from the mix), this volume brings that jam session right into your own home. There are eight songs that include Willie Dixon's 'My Babe', John Lee Hooker's 'Boom Boom' and Elmore James' 'Dust My Broom'. Each song carries the lyrics and has lead sheets with chord symbols for Eb, Bb, C and C bass instruments, which are both clear and easy to follow with the relevant CD tracks listed at the head of each score. This is one of those music compilations that you can really enjoy, knowing that the band is always there whenever you feel like letting off steam! **(DG)**
www.halleonardeurope.com

Ableton Live 12 music production software

The latest iteration of Ableton's Live music production software brings some major updates and some surprises too. Perhaps the biggest improvements come to the graphical user interface (GUI) which for the first time allows you to view the mixer when in 'arrangement view' (the default horizontal scrolling view) that can easily be toggled on and off. This also allows you to simultaneously view the individual track's software instrument, MIDI clip notes and effects, all of which also have expandable views for easier editing.

The most innovative and unique addition in Live 12 is a whole host of 'MIDI Tools' that are located in the MIDI clip view and come under 'Transformations' and 'Generators' categories. These allow for deep editing as well as some generative functionality, that's not facilitated by an AI. (See Ableton's website for a full exploration of these elements.) Notable additions now include highly tweakable 'quantization' for subtle timing adjustments; note generation (including chord stacks and inversions), off-kilter rhythms, arpeggios, note strums, gestural shapes and improved editing of the 'chance' and 'velocity' parameters helping the simplest musical starting points to become fully blown songs.

New software instruments include the wonderful sounding new 'Meld' bi-timbral, MPE-capable synth that can create exciting textural and experimental tones with its two easy-to-use macro-oscillators. There's also an amazing multi-band distortion effect aptly named 'Roar' that has three saturation stages and can be used in series, parallel, or even in mid/side and multiband configurations to add grit and punch to drums, bass or whatever needs spicing up.

There are some big accessibility improvements too, with visually impaired musicians benefitting from screen reader support and new keyboard shortcuts to allow nearly every part of Live to be accessed using intuitive key combinations. With many more innovative improvements added (see link below for the full list) this update makes Live even more feature packed and increasingly limitless.

The RRP of £179 to upgrade is sweetened by Ableton's 20% discount promotion remaining until February 2025 – and if you just got Live 11 you may be entitled for a free upgrade – just check your account. **(MF)**
www.ableton.com/en

"It's a rare treat to hear artistry quite so close."
(★★★★ TheArtsDesk)

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UPCOMING SHOWS

Tcha Limberger's Viper Club

Friday 10 May

The award-winning violinist performs with his quartet featuring **Jerome Etcheberry** on trumpet, **Dave Kelbie** on rhythm guitar, and **Sébastien Girardot** on double bass, as part of the Gypsy Jazz Festival of London.

"As good as it gets when it comes to music that swings."
(Bebop Spoken Here)

Julian Joseph's Atmospheres In Audio Theatre

Friday 17 May

New music specifically composed by the leading pianist, to show how emotion and drama can be enhanced by our immersive d&b Soundscape technology – marrying acoustic sound with digital processing capability that can be achieved on the fly; Julian's exciting new band features **Alok Verma** on tablas and **Kaidi Akinnibi** on sax.ophone.

Joabe Reis

Monday 1 July

Hot Brazilian trombonist, having previously performed with Bob Mintzer, Hermeto Pascoal and Hamilton de Holanda, now makes his London debut performing from new album *028*.

"One of the most iconic musicians of Brazilian jazz right now."
(Sounds & Colours)

Tim Garland Lighthouse Trio

Friday 6 September

This unique concert by the international trio, pianist **Gwilym Simcock** and drummer & percussionist **Asaf Sirkis**, will also feature works created by Turkish painter and printmaker **Esra Kizir Gokcen** screened within the concert hall itself, as a stunning backdrop to complement the live performance. There will also be a pre-concert talk with the artists.

"At the forefront of contemporary music without borders."
(All About Jazz)

Slowly Rolling Camera

Thursday 17 October

Enthralling display of the band's evolution and artistic breadth, enriched by contributions from saxophonist Josh Arcoleo, bassist Jon Goode, and guitarist Stuart McCallum.

"All mournful horns and shivery electronics; their genre-straddling sound is as visceral as it is chilled."
(★★★★ Guardian)

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Live Reviews

Clockwise from far left: Zoh Amba; Joe McPhee; Camille Émaille; Hamid Drake; and Sven-Åke Johannson - Photos © Frank Rubolino.

3 Days of Music Dedicated to Peter Brötzmann

Café OTO, London, UK

Almost exactly a year to the day since Peter Brötzmann's last public performance, at Cafe OTO in February 2023, the London venue staged a dream-team convocation of artists who had been associated with the great saxophonist throughout his nearly 60 years on the road.

Ample testament to the generosity and curiosity Brötzmann brought to his collaborations right to the end was the more than half a century's difference in the ages of the oldest and youngest.

At one end of the timeline were fellow pioneers of European free music in the 1960s – veterans including pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach and drummers Han Bennink and Sven-Åke Johannson – all of whom imparted a hard-won sense of authority. At the other, a new generation of artists keeping the spirit alive: classically trained French percussionist Camille Émaille brought a captivating precision and poise to her improvisations, while 23-year-old New York-based saxophonist Zoh Amba demonstrated a fierce commitment, blowing with concentrated, uncompromising energy.

It was a decidedly international affair, too, drawing on the talents of European comrades as well as a notable contingent from Brötzmann's Chicago Tentet days – including the 84-year-old and eternally youthful saxophonist Joe McPhee who performed a moving poetic recitation with accompaniment from vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz. The crack US rhythm section of drummer Hamid Drake and bassist William Parker were also on hand to add some weighty bounce, not least in a careening trio with British pianist Pat Thomas.

With 20 artists appearing in various different configurations across three evenings and an afternoon matinee, it was a densely-packed programme with an exciting festival atmosphere. Each set was limited to roughly 20 minutes, lending performances a pang of urgency, with participants seeming keen to pay tribute with as much passion as they could muster. In a very real sense, it felt like history. **Daniel Spicer**

Braxton Cook

Ronnie Scott's, London

Few saxophonists can harness a tone that is as smooth and self-assured as alto player Braxton Cook's. Coming to prominence as a longtime member of trumpeter Christian Scott's band and featuring on several of his records including 2015's searing *Stretch Music*, since the release of Cook's debut LP, 2017's *Somewhere In Between*, he has been honing a sound that artfully combines the warmth of R&B melodies with dexterous improvisation fuelled by socially conscious themes.

Returning to London's Ronnie Scott's for the first time since 2019, 32-year-old Cook takes to the stage accompanied by a young, fierce trio featuring Julian Rodriguez on keys and synth bass, Lucas Kadish on guitar and Brian Richburg on drums. The group's opening numbers, 'Millennial Music' and 'FJYD', both taken from *Somewhere In Between,* set the tone for the heavy-grooving 90-minute set to come. Cook lays back in the pocket, allowing the rhythm section to establish a soulful foundation, before soaring through intricate, keening solos that blaze along the saxophone keys without ever breaking out of his gentle dynamic. It is a remarkable skill for Cook to play so expressively and quietly, only ever allowing listeners hints of the force behind his breath on moments when his reed squeals between octave jumps.

Other highlights include the snapping electronic drums and dark melodic palette of 'MB (For Ma'Khyia Bryant)', which plays as an example of one of Cook's compositions paying tribute to murdered black youth, channelling the tragedy of the crime into poignant and moving improvisation. Meanwhile, numbers like 'No Doubt' and 'We Major' from 2018's *No Doubt* showcase pianist Rodriguez's muscular right hand and drummer Richburg's fractal grooves beneath Cook's wandering and stirring melodies.

There are a few too many tracks on the set list where Cook lays down his saxophone to sing instead, demonstrating his pleasant voice but ultimately illustrating the fact that he is far more impactful when he sings through the wordless sound of his instrument. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the balladic introspection of closing number 'Black Mona Lisa'. Here, Cook channels everything from gospel yearning to emphatic expression on his long, looping notes, demonstrating the quiet power in his soulful sound. **Ammar Kalia**

Paco De Lucia Tribute at 23rd Annual Flamenco Festival,

Le Poisson Rouge, New York

Ten years after the passing of Francisco Sánchez Gómez – better known as Paco de Lucía – at only 66 years old, the legacy of the Spanish guitarist was celebrated in grand fashion with five nights – preceding the anniversary of his death – of events around New York. The timing was doubly fortuitous. From 1 to 17 March would be the 23rd Annual Flamenco Festival New York, fêting the art form that de Lucía helped make an international phenomenon. Flamenco

Photos: Maro Rennella

has changed greatly over time, moving away from the Romani folk tradition of vocal accompaniment to mix with Spanish classical guitar, becoming more heavily instrumental and performative, mirroring the nearby development in France that birthed Manouche jazz.

The first half of the de Lucía celebration at Le Poisson Rouge in February spoke both to Flamenco's roots and then its modern incarnation, in reverse order. A Spanish trio of guitarist José Miguel 'Josemi' Carmona, bassist Javier Colina and percussionist Israel Suarez 'Piraña' Escobar played five pieces that demonstrated both remarkable instrumental facility and the highly tactile and inherently dance-like aspects of modern Flamenco. Carmona and Colina – sounds like a Spanish law firm – are old friends, having recorded together in various formations, including as the duo De Cerca, since the turn of the millennium. That experience was evident in their dialogues, doubled melody lines and *rasgueado* flourishes. What was especially nice was that the music contained dynamic shifts and open spaces, virtuosity actually in service of something rather than as a means unto itself.

Pieces included Chick Corea's 'Spain', which opened with one of the aforementioned guitar-bass conversations before dropping into a waltz feel recalling Miles Davis' 'Flamenco Sketches' rather than the more typically hyper readings of the tune; the Arthur Schwartz-Howard Dietz standard 'You and the Night and the Music', its jazz swing replaced by Flamenco swirl and featuring a fervent cajón solo; and, oddly enough, Irish traditional lament 'Danny Boy' in a reading that would not have been out of place on *The Muppet Show*.

Next, to great fanfare, legendary Flamenco guitarist Pepe Habichuela was introduced; he is a contemporary of de Lucía and has employed both Carmona and Colina. Rather than play through an amplifier like Carmona, a microphone was carefully placed in front of his instrument, and one could feel a venerable grace coming from his fingers. But, after a five-minute piece with the trio and a standing ovation, Habichuela left the stage to the surprise of everyone, especially Carmona.

This initiated the final segment, introducing singer Sílvia Pérez Cruz. First, she duetted beautifully with Colina, who also sang, then with the whole group on a samba-esque ballad and the longest piece of the night, a nine-minute dance of shifting tempo and energy. Unsurprisingly, Cruz received the loudest and most sustained applause, but her presence muted the impact of the trio behind her, maybe making things more anachronistically authentic but not as interesting. **Andrey Henkin**

QOW Trio

The Vortex, London

On a rainy night in Dalston, QOW Trio ("It's pronounced 'cow'," asserts affable bassist-MC and *Jazzwise* contributor Eddie Myer midway through the band's opening set) were playing a concert to launch their latest album *The Hold Up*. Piles of CDs and LPs on the merchandise stall and Sharpie markers at the ready, the group were doing very brisk business after the show.

This is because QOW Trio are a simply phenomenal live act, one of those groups who, even if you're lukewarm about their recorded output, will win you over in the concert environment (and in the Vortex's intimate space tonight, they often sounded thunderous). This is in part due to the visual spectacle the group offer: Myer caressing his bass, the eccentric, almost beatific Spike Wells perched above his drum kit and the hard-blowing saxman Riley Stone-Lonergan, looking resplendent in a Judas Priest T-shirt. But mostly, it's down to the gusto with which they approach their music, and the sheer joy they communicate.

Playing a mixture of Stone-Lonergan originals from *The Hold Up*, and a choice selection of covers (Big John Patton's 'Along Came John', Lee Morgan's 'Our Man Higgins', and Dewey Redman's 'Cow' among others),

Photo: Mireille Chancel

our heroic threesome were by turns meaty, soulful, boisterous, bluesy and always in perfect lockstep; Wells' powerful percussive flourishes and Myer's precise but elastic bass providing the ideal bedrock for Riley's superbly expressive, sinuous blowing.

The trio, who span three generations, also have a winning (and rare) understanding of dynamics, of light and shade, so although the material was almost uniformly upbeat, one never longed for something slow-paced or balladic to provide variety: these two sets offered everything you might want from a chordless jazz trio.

The audience clapping along to Riley's remarkable solo on the hyper-groovy and delightfully witty 'Bastard Gentleman' was all the proof needed that this was the perfect tonic to the dismal weather outside. Fun is a much underrated quality in jazz, but QOW Trio were *fun*, and infectiously so. No wonder the audience mobbed the merch stand afterwards. **Kevin Whitlock**

Hejira

Jazz Cafe, London

So tightly-packed was the crowd for Hejira's first gig of 2024 that the place could probably have sold out for three nights. Yet for most of the evening you could have heard a pin drop: they came to listen because they love Joni Mitchell, the artist whose work is this band's *raison d'être*. But they went away loving Hejira.

Any half-decent tribute act might have provided these Mitchell fans with an enjoyable night out. Hejira, however, have the potential to become a cult. There were hints of this in the wild reception given to mild-mannered bassist Dave Jones, the long-unsung titan of Pastorius-style fretless bass, who suddenly finds himself blinking in the spotlight. Likewise, the band's more flamboyant leader, Metheny-esque guitarist Pete Oxley, who has been at it just as long, but has evolved into a funny and engaging frontman.

The real star, of course, is Hattie Whitehead, whose task is to sing the songs and play rhythm guitar. And here we come to the nub of Hejira's quality: no two ways about it, Whitehead is one of the greatest singers I have ever heard. Not just in vocal tone, range, accuracy, enunciation, and sheer confidence, but in interpretation: despite her aura of self-contained cool, she brilliantly wrings the ragged emotions out of Mitchell's tunes.

For much of the time this was a quiet performance. You know these are jazz musicians, because they give each other space, and everyone had their moment to shine, from the dramatic drums-and-percussion battle between Rick Finlay and Marc Cecil to the Breckerish solos of Ollie Weston. Only keyboards man Chris Eldred seemed a little under-used: there is more gas in this tank, for sure.

Amid the expected favourites – 'Coyote', 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat', 'A Case of You', 'Woodstock' (done as a slow, haunting ballad) – they also played Metheny's 'Phase Dance', and an Oxley instrumental called 'Surging Waves', a rampaging samba that was one of the best things of the night. **Peter Jones**

Gig Guide MAY 24

Rosie Hanley previews the must-see gigs and concerts. Send future listings to **roseanne.hanley@gmail.com**

All listings are run free but due to space restrictions cannot be guaranteed to appear – expanded gig listings can be found at **www.jazzwise.com/gig-guide**

WEDNESDAY

1 Cheltenham Jazz Festival: Dionne Warwick, Elaine Delmar and more
Various venues, Cheltenham
1 JD Allen and Sebastian Chames Quartet
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
1 Finn Carter Quartet (first house) Shez Raja (second house)
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
1 Jakub Klimiuk Quintet feat Mark Lockheart
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
1-2 Stacey Bros Royal Scammers
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

THURSDAY

2 Do Disturb
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
2 Yessaï Karapetian (first house) Resolution 88 (second house)
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
2 Major Ruse
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
2 CJF: Toby Lee, Jack Savoretti and more
Various venues, Cheltenham
2-6 City of Derry Jazz and Big Band Festival: Christine Tobin, Julian Siegel and more
Various venues, Derry
2 Tim Boniface Quartet with Malcolm Guite
Newcastle Cathedral, St Nicholas Square, Newcastle upon Tyne
2 Guido Spannocchi Quartet
Music Spoken Here at The Marrs Bar, 12 Pierpoint Street, Worcester

FRIDAY

3 Coalminers
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
3 Dave Douglas and Trish Clowes
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
3 Jasmine Myra
Turner Sims, University of Southampton, Southampton
3 CJF: Brand New Heavies, Orchestra Baobab and Nubyian Twist and more
Various venues, Cheltenham

Jasmine Myra, 3 (Southampton) and 29 (Nottingham) May

3 Jake Leg Jug Band
Saltburn Community Hall, Albion Terrace, Saltburn-by-sea
3 Zara McFarlane
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
3 Leon Greening and Steve Fishwick
Ladbroke Hall, 79 Barlby Road, London W10
3 Dean Stockdale Trio
Old Library, Auckland Castle, Market Place, Bishop Auckland
3 Scottish National Jazz Orchestra with Makoto Ozone and Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Usher Hall, Lothian Road, Edinburgh
3 Emma Rawicz Quintet
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
3 Clark Tracey Quintet
Wakefield Jazz, Sports Club, 8 Eastmoor Road, Wakefield

SATURDAY

4 Jeff Barnhart's Mr Men
St Augustine's Parish Centre, Larchfield Street, Darlington
4 Snarky Puppy
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
4 Clark Tracey Quintet
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
4 CJF: Lakecia Benjamin, Dee Dee Bridgewater and more
Various venues, Cheltenham
4 Equal Spirits
Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, London E1
4 Scottish National Jazz Orchestra with Makoto Ozone and Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow
4 Perico Sambeat Quartet (evening) Terence Collie (lunchtime)
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

SUNDAY

5 McCullum, Vicary and Hanley
Seven Arts, 31 Harrogate Road, Leeds
5 CJF: Zara McFarlane, Theo Croker and more
Various venues, Cheltenham
5 Down for the Count All-stars
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
5 Ronnie Scott's Blues Explosion
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
5 Scottish National Jazz Orchestra with Makoto Ozone
Aberdeen Music Hall, Union Street, Aberdeen
5 Equal Spirits
Tobacco Factory, Raleigh Road, Southville, Bristol
5 Hejira
The Cornish Bank, 34 Church Street, Falmouth
5 Frances Madden
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
5 Zoe Schwarz Blue Commotion
The Pheasantry, 152/154 Kins Road, London SW3

MONDAY

6-12 Gypsy Jazz Festival of London: Seonaid Aitken, Sylvian Luc, Stochelo Rosenberg and more
Various venues, London
6 Clark Tracey Quintet
Kenilworth Jazz Club, Kenilworth Rugby Club
6 Sean Gibbs Big Band
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
6 Ronnie Scott's Jazz Orchestra
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
6 CJF: Gregory Porter, corto.alto and more
Various venues, Cheltenham
6 Hejira
Fougou Music, Exeter Phoenix, Gandy Street, Exeter

TUESDAY

7 Mark Lockheart and John Parricelli Quartet
East Side Jazz Club, 2 Harvey Road, London E11
7 Ben Creighton-Griffiths Chube
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
7-12 Stacey Kent
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
7 Chube
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
7 Simon Woolf's Tribute to Red Mitchell feat Imogen Ryall
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

WEDNESDAY

8 Blueblut and Seb Rochford and Pamelia Stickney
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
8 ISQ
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
8 Rory Ingham and James Davison Sextet
Fleece Jazz, Stoke-by-Nayland Hotel, Colchester
8 David Gordon
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
8 The Mingus Project
Swansea Jazz Club, Cu Mumbles, 7 Castleton Walk Arcade, Newton Road, Swansea

THURSDAY

9 Gary Crosby and Denys Baptiste
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
9 Neil Angilley
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
9 Fergus Quill Quintet
Seven Arts, 31 Harrogate Road, Leeds

FRIDAY

10 Tcha Limberger's Viper Club
World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens, 3 Ponton Road, London SW11
10 Dana Masters
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
10 Nye Banfield Quartet
B:Music, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Birmingham
10-12 Birmingham Jazz Festival: Then and Now
1000 Trades, 16 Fredrick Street, Birmingham
10 Zoe Gilby Quartet
St Cuthbert's Centre, Church Hill, Crook
10 Denys Baptiste
Ladbroke Hall, 79 Barlby Road, London W10
10 Pete Horsfall
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
10 Ralph Dartford's Hidden Music
Wakefield Jazz, Sports Club, 8 Eastmoor Road, Wakefield

SATURDAY

11 Milne-Glendinning Band
St Mary Magdalene Church, West Street, Yarm
11 Jeffrey Hewer Trio
Vault, East Row, Darlington

2 Clark Tracey Quintet

Albemarle Music Centre, 60 Ferensway, Hull

The **Clark Tracey Quintet** sets out on tour to promote their latest album *Introducing Emily Masser*. The new record features bassist **James Owston**, pianist **Graham Harvey**, saxophonist and flautist **Alex Clarke** – who demonstrates some particularly wonderful playing on the album – and of course emerging vocal talent **Emily Masser**, who inspired the album and is a name to watch for sure. Expect consummate jazz from this Brit-jazz drumming legend and his band.

9 Shabaka Hutchings
Barbican, Silk Street, London EC2
The inimitable talent and multi-instrumentalist **Shabaka Hutchings** returns to the Barbican stage to perform from his Afrikan Culture project which focuses around the *Shakuhachi* (an eastern Asian instrument), alongside showcasing a selection of new work from his latest album *Perceive its Beauty, Acknowledge its Grace*. Hutchings' performances are always compelling, of the highest technical skill and continue to cement him as one of the UK's most exciting and pioneering musicians.

11 James Morton (evening), George Colligan Quartet (lunchtime)
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
11 Tom Ollendorf and Tim Garland
Shrewsbury Jazz, The Hive Music Centre, Belmont, Shrewsbury
11 Richard Shelton with Syd Lawrence Orchestra
Cadogan Hall, 5 Sloane Terrace, London SW1
11 TJ Johnson Band
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
11 Alligator Gumbo
Witham, 3 Horse Market, Barnard Castle
11 Rebecka Edlund's Virgin Forest
Listen Cambridge, Cambridge Unitarian Church, 5 Emmanuel Road, Cambridge
11 David Janeway
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

SUNDAY
12 Fergus McCreadie Trio
The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, St Mary's Square, Gateshead
12 GoGo Penguin
Wylam Brewery, Palace of Arts, Exhibition Park, Newcastle upon Tyne
12 Alice Armstrong (evening) Nikki Iles Jazz Orchestra (lunchtime)
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
12 Silvan Schmid, Tom Wheatly and Eddie Prevost, plus Signe Emmeluth
Globe, Railway Street, Newcastle upon Tyne
12 Raphael Tate
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
12 Vimala Rowe and John Etheridge (evening) Claire Martin and Ian Shaw (afternoon)
Wakefield Jazz, Sports Club, 8 Eastmoor Road, Wakefield
12 Alan Barnes Quartet
City Wall Jazz, High Street, Rochester, Kent

MONDAY
13 Emma Fisk and James Birkett
Yamaha Music School, Seaforth Street, Blyth
13 Billy Marrows and Grande Familia
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
13 Bacha Mdzinarashvili Quintet
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
13 Jonathan Gee with Gaetano Partipilo
Cheltenham Jazz, The Victory Club Ballroom, Burlington House, Lypiatt Road, Cheltenham

TUESDAY
14 Dave Manington Sextet
East Side Jazz Club, 2 Harvey Road, London E11
14 Lewis Cassar
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
14 Branco Stoysin
Dulwich Festival, Bell House, Dulwich, London SE21
14 Big Ben: Celebrating Ben Webster
Watermill Jazz, Betchworth Park Golf Club, Dorking
14 Jonathan Gee with Gaetano Partipilo
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
14 Art Themen Trio
Fougou Music, Livermead Cliff Hotel, Seafront, Torquay

WEDNESDAY
15 Beyond the Blue, plus Donovan Haffner
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
15 Mike Redfern Band
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
15 Yellowjackets
The Forge, 3-7 Delaney Street, Camden, London NW1
15-16 Mike Stern Band
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
15 Bill Frisell Trio
Islington Assembly Hall, Upper Street, London N1
15 Vipertime
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
15 Martin Kern and Adam Stokes Trio
St George's Bristol, Great George Street, Bristol
15 Awen Ensemble
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
15 Daniel John Martin with Dave Cottle Trio
Swansea Jazz Club, Cu Mumbles, 7 Castleton Walk Arcade, Newton Road, Swansea

THURSDAY
16-17 Ian Shaw with Paul Gambaccini
Crazy Coqs, Brasserie Zedel, 20 Sherwood Street, London W1
16 Matt Anderson Quartet
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
16 Clark Tracey Quintet Quintet
Lauderdale House, Waterlow Park, Highgate, London N6
16 Bill Frisell Trio
St George's Bristol, Great George Street, Bristol
16 Ben Martin Quartet
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
16 Guildhall Big Band feat Jean Toussaint
Milton Court Studio Theatre, London EC2
16-17 Carla Cook
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
16 Tony O'Malley
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
16 Steve Taylor
Music Spoken Here at The Marrs Bar, 12 Pierpoint Street, Worcester

FRIDAY
17 Julian Joseph's Atmospheres in Studio Theatre
World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens, 3 Ponton Road, London SW11
17 Andrea Vicari Trio
Traveller's Rest, West Auckland Road, Cockerton, Darlington
17 Manchester Jazz Festival (MJF): Gaz Hughes Trio and Secret Night Gang
Various venues, Manchester
17 Julian Siegel Quartet (first house) Boreal Sun (second house)
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
17 Francisco Garcia de Paredes Duo
St George's Bristol, Great George Street, Bristol
17 Dave Newton and Dean Stockdale
Lit & Phil, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne
17 Hot Club du Nord
Seventeen Nineteen, Church Street East, Sunderland
17 Strictly Smokin' Big Band feat Bruce Adams, Alan Barnes and Paul Booth
Fire Station, High Street West, Sunderland
17 Zhenya Strigalev Quintet
Ladbroke Hall, 79 Barlby Road, London W10
17 Jonny Mansfield Quartet
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
17 Straight 8s Big Band feat Dennis Rollins
Wakefield Jazz, Sports Club, 8 Eastmoor Road, Wakefield

SATURDAY
18 Brandon Allen
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
18 Joanna Eden
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
18 Olivia Cuttill and Colectiva
Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank, London SE1
18 Paul Booth's Bansangu
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
18-19 Jeremy Sassoon
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
18 MJF: A Hologram Maze, Conor and The GreensKeepers and more
Various venues, Manchester

SUNDAY
19 Munch Manship Quartet
Seven Arts, 31 Harrogate Road, Leeds
19 Threeway
Huddersfield Jazz, Irish Centre, Huddersfield
19 Frank Cognoscenti
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
19 Alan Barnes Octet
Phyliss Court Club, Marlow Road, Henley-on-Thames
19 Mike Westbrook (lunchtime)
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
19 Natalie Williams Soul Family (evening), Salena Jones (lunchtime)
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
19 Martin Dale Quartet
Plymouth Jazz Club, The Royal British Legion Club, Tailyour Road, Crownhill, Plymouth
19 MJF: Jazz North Northern Line Showcase
Various venues, Manchester
19 Dana Gillespie (evening), Sarah Gillespie (lunchtime)
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
19 Ian East Quartet
City Wall Jazz, High Street, Rochester, Kent

MONDAY
20-21 Bill Evans and the Vansband All Stars
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
20 Almanaque
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
20 MJF: The Wagon Train, Johnny Hunter and more
Various venues, Manchester
20 Central Bar Quartet
Central Bar, Half Moon Lane, Gateshead

TUESDAY
21 MJF: Daniel Erdmann's Therapie de Couple and Slow Down Motion
Various venues, Manchester
21 Hannes Riepler Quartet
East Side Jazz Club, 2 Harvey Road, London E11
21 Chris Corcoran Band
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
21 ARQ Live Recording
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
21 Martin Speake
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
21 Lighthouse Trio
NCEM, St Margaret's Church, Walmgate, York

WEDNESDAY
22 Heidi Vogel
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
22 MJF: Huw Warren, Choro Choro Choro and The Mudez Project
Various venues, Manchester
22 Adam Ben Ezra and Michael Olivera
Jazz Cafe, 5 Parkway, Camden, London NW1
22 Clark Tracey Quintet
Fleece Jazz, Stoke-by-Nayland Hotel, Colchester
22 Ed Richardson Big Band
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
22 The Sam Every Big Band
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

18 Sheffield Jazz 50th Anniversary Concert:
Featuring Emma Rawicz Quartet and Tony Kofi Quartet
Sheffield Jazz, Crucible Theatre, 55 Norfolk Street, Sheffield
Sheffield Jazz celebrate their milestone 50th anniversary by presenting a double-bill cofeaturing two great all-star bands led by multi-award winning British Jazz musicians – saxophonists **Emma Rawicz** and **Tony Kofi**. Rawicz leads her quartet of pianist **Ivo Neame**, bassist **Conor Chaplin** and drummer **Asaf Sirkis**, while Kofi heads up his four-piece comprised of pianist **Jonathan Gee**, bassist **Ben Hazleton** and drummer **Rod Youngs**. A brilliant line up of some of leading musicians – well worth checking out if you can.

Airshots
May 24 Radio

BBC RADIO 2 88-91 FM and DAB
Jamie Cullum show (Tues, 9pm)

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM and DAB

'Round Midnight (Mon-Fri 11.30pm)

Jazz Record Requests (Sun, 4pm)

BBC RADIO 6 MUSIC DAB
Gilles Peterson, Sat 3pm

JAZZ FM DAB, Sky, Alexa, smartphone, tablet and online at jazzfm.com
(Mon – Fri) 6am-6.30am Business Breakfast, 6.30am-10am Jazz FM Breakfast with Nigel Williams, 10am-2pm Midmornings with Danielle Perry, 2pm-6pm Afternoon drive with Simon Philips, 6pm-7pm Jazz FM's Greatest with Mark Walker, 7pm-9pm Dinner Jazz with Mark Walker. (Mon) 9pm-10pm The Performance Series with Ruth Fisher, 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Tues) 9pm-10pm Jazz Travels with Sarah Ward, 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Weds) . 9pm-10pm The Big Easy with Lil' Koko. 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Thurs) 9pm-10pm True Brit with Helen Mayhew. 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Fri) 9pm-10pm The Ronnie Scott's Radio Show with Ian Shaw. 10pm-1am Late Night Jazz with Helen Mayhew. (Sat) 6am-9am The Weekend Breakfast with Nia Visser, 9am-10am Jazz Shapers with Elliot Moss, 10am-2pm Nigel Williams Saturday Show, 2pm-6pm YolanDa Brown on Saturday, 6pm-9pm The Sarah Ward Collection, 9pm-10pm Jazz FM Voices, 10pm-1am The Blueprint with Chris Philips. (Sun) 6am-10am The Weekend Breakfast with Simon Phillips, 10am-1pm Tony Minvielle, 1-3pm Robbie Vincent, 3pm-5pm Sunday Afternoons with John Osborne, 5-7pm Blues and Boogie with David Freeman, 7pm-9pm Clare Teal Big Band Jazz; 9pm Sunday Discovery and 10pm-1am Somethin' Else with Jez Nelson, Ruth Fisher's Full Circle 1-3am.

ONLINE AND PODCASTS
Courtney Pine's Global Podcast at www.jazzwise.com and YouTube
www.soulandjazz.com – Mike Chadwick bi-weekly show; Tony Minvielle, first and third Wednesdays each month;
Jazz Haven with Robert Howe (8-10pm Mondays) www.avondaleradio.com/schedule/#monday
Jazz On The Beach with Adam Sieff, every Wednesday from 10.00pm - 12.00 midnight on DealRadio.co.uk; the 606 Club Straight Ahead Show with Dave Lewis, every Wednesday at 10pm.
Richard Heath's Alt 2 Show www.radio.lsu.co.uk (9-11pm Thurs);
www.mykindamusic24.com – the Jazz Cavern, Thur 9pm
Dave Self's Sounds of Jazz (4-5pm Tues) www.tunein.com/radio/Blast-1386-s6837/
www.jazzlondonradio.com
www.cosmicjazz.co.uk with Derek Merrill
www.careradio.org - Alan Steadman's Jazz Waves Sun 11pm and repeated.

REGIONAL RADIO ENGLAND
World Beats, Kane 103.7 FM www.kanefm.com (Thurs, 11am); The Jazz Show, 99.2 Hermitage FM with Peter Varden (Weds, 6pm) on 99.2 FM in north west Leicestershire area and online at www.hermitagefm.com; Jazz Kaleidoscope with Alan Musson on 102.5FM in the Southern Black Country and online at www.thebridgeradio.net (Mon, 9pm); Slipstreem Worldwide Beats, RadioReverb 97.2 FM in Brighton and radioreverb.com (11am Sunday); Late Night Jazz with Colin Dickenson, Witney Radio 99.9-107.9 FM (Thurs, 10pm)

WALES Radio Cardiff 98.7 FM, Humie Webbe's Jazz Train (Sun, 10am) and Late Night Jazz (Thurs 10-11pm) on www.witney.radio.

SCOTLAND BBC Radio Scotland 92.4-94.7 FM The Jazz Nights with Seonaid Aitken (Sun, 7pm)

NORTHERN IRELAND BBC Radio Ulster 92-95 FM Walter Love (Sun, 7pm)

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND RTÉ John Kelly's Mystery Train, RTE Lyric FM (Sun-Thurs, 7-9pm); Brian Priestley's That's Jazz, Radio Kerry (Weds, 9-10pm and podcast).

22 Tivon Pennicott Quartet
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
22 Daniel Erdmann's Therapie de Couple
The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, St Mary's Square, Gateshead
22 John Paul Gard Trio
Swansea Jazz Club, Cu Mumbles, 7 Castleton Walk Arcade, Newton Road, Swansea
22 Pete Downes Trio
The Barley Mow, 67 Watersplash Road, Shepperton, Surrey

THURSDAY
23 Dolphin Hyperspace, plus Christos Styliandes and Daisy George
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
23 - 27 Sidmouth International Jazz and Blues Festival: Moscow Drug Club, Ian Shaw, Roberto Fonseca and more
Blackmore Gardens, Sidmouth, Devon
23 Espen Eriksen Trio with Andy Sheppard
St George's Bristol, Great George Street, Bristol
23 Inês Loubet
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
23 MJF: Nubyian Twist, D'Accord and The Gelatos
Various venues, Manchester
23-25 Eric Marienthal
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
23 Chris Botti
Barbican, Silk Street, London EC2
23 Redtenbacher's Funkestra
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
23 Leeds Jazz Festival (LJF): Alan Barnes, Sam Watts and more
Various venues, Leeds
23 Immortal Onion, plus Rivkala
Cobalt Studios, Boyd Street, Newcastle upon Tyne
23 Julian Costello Quartet with Georgia Mancio
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

FRIDAY
24 Olivia Cuttill Quintet
Wakefield Jazz, Sports Club, 8 Eastmoor Road, Wakefield
24-25 Ihan Ersahin's Istanbul Sessions
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
24 MJF: Trish Clowes, Ross Stanley, Lighthouse Trio and more
Various venues, Manchester
24-25 Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio
The Forge, 3-7 Delaney Street, Camden, London NW1
24 Joe Tatton Trio
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
24 Hot Club du Nord
Gala Theatre & Cinema, Millennium Place, Durham
24 LJF: Nubyian Twist, Fergus McCreadie Trio and more
Various venues, Leeds
24 Clare Teal Four
Ladbroke Hall, 79 Barlby Road, London W10
24 Espen Eriksen Trio, plus Andy Sheppard
Live @Union Lane, Brampton, Cumbria

SATURDAY
25 Nubyian Twist
The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, St Mary's Square, Gateshead
25 Shear Brass
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
25 Corto.alto
Turner Sims, University of Southampton, Southampton
25 Jacqui Dankworth
Stapleford Granary, Bury Road, Stapleford, Cambridge
25 LJF: Courtney Pine, Kamaal Williams and more
Various venues, Leeds
25 MJF: SARĀB, John Surman and more
Various venues, Manchester
25 Paul Edis Trio
Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Beaumont Street, Hexham
25 Clark Tracey Quintet
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

SUNDAY
26 Noel McCalla and Derek Nash
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

26 SARĀB
The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, St Mary's Square, Gateshead
Fusing jazz-rock and Arab traditional music, **SARĀB** – meaning 'mirage' in Arabic – are one of the most popular bands in the Parisian jazz scene. Trombone player **Robinson Khoury** is a standout, with his voice like delivery navigating between Eastern and European scales. This gig is part of a wider tour programmed by The Glasshouse, Manchester Jazz Festival, and Music Meeting Festival in the Netherlands which will travel between venues exclusively by train. The tour serves as a pilot for a new model for sustainable touring and to help build local relationships. By taking the train, artists can significantly reduce their impact on the planet. We like to hear it.

26 W3 Funk Sessions (evening), Jive Aces (lunchtime)
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
26 Bryony Jarman-Pinto
Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Beaumont Street, Hexham
26 MJF: Courtney Pine, Laura Jurd and Carole Nelson Trio
Various venues, Manchester
26 Darren Beckett Trio
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
26 Nicola Farnon Trio
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
26 LJF: Phil Minton, Laura Misch and more
Various venues, Leeds
26 Ruth Lambert Quartet
Globe, Railway Street, Newcastle upon Tyne
26 London Django Collective
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
26 Clark Tracey Quintet
Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Beaumont Street, Hexham
26 Sarah Bolter Quartet
City Wall Jazz, High Street, Rochester, Kent

MONDAY
27 LJF: Rosie Frater-Taylor, Amy Clark and more
Various venues, Leeds
27 Tom Waters and Alice Armstrong
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
27 New Focus
St John's Kirk, St John's Place, Perth
27 SARĀB
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

TUESDAY
28 Richard Shelton and Syd Lawrence Orchestra
Middlesbrough Town Hall, Albert Road, Middlesbrough
28 LJF: SARĀB, SHL Trio and more
Various venues, Leeds
28 Joe Webb Trio
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
28 Julian Costello Quartet
East Side Jazz Club, 2 Harvey Road, London E11
28 Bernardo Lobo
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

WEDNESDAY
29 Brigitte Beraha's Lucid Dreamers
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
29 Marcus Joseph
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
29 Black Top
Cafe Oto, 18-22 Ashwin Street, London E8
29 Jasmine Myra
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
29-31 Kamaal Williams
Jazz Cafe, 5 Parkway, Camden, London NW1
29 Jane Monheit
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
29 Remembering Geoff Castle
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
29 The New Conrad Miller Trio
Swansea Jazz Club, Cu Mumbles, 7 Castleton Walk Arcade, Newton Road, Swansea

THURSDAY
30 Sean Fyfe
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
30 Brandon Allen Quartet
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
30 Tutu Puoane (first house), Jowee Omicil's Elements
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
30 Fergus McCreadie Trio
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham
30 Lighthouse Trio
Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1
30 Jasper Høiby's 3Elements Trio
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
30 Secret Night Garden
Music Spoken Here at The Marrs Bar, 12 Pierpoint Street, Worcester

FRIDAY
31 Ingham Brothers Quintet
Wakefield Jazz, Sports Club, 8 Eastmoor Road, Wakefield
31 Samara
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10
31 Myra Melford Splash Trio
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
31 Dany Noel Cuban Project
Ladbroke Hall, 79 Barlby Road, London W10
31 Borealis
Witham, 3 Horse Market, Barnard Castle
31 José James presents 1978
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1
31 Sambroso All Stars
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1
31 The New Conrad Miller Trio
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

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★ Art Themen Organ Quintet ★
★ Dave Newton & Alan Barnes ★
★ The Printmakers with Norma Winstone & Nikki Iles ★
★ Martin Litton's Red Hot Peppers ★
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Letters

Write in to us here at Letters Dept, Jazzwise Magazine, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB or email letters@jazzwise.com

A biz insider's view on CDs and the vinyl resurgence...

First off, let me state that I am wholeheartedly in favour of the current vinyl resurgence (a word I prefer to 'revival'). But I must also bring a cautionary note to the table. Your recent letters from Peter Ryan (issue 291) and Steven Tulip (issue 293) both had salient points to make.

I take on board the fact that the prices of LPs today can certainly seem prohibitive, but I also think that the vinyl resurgence is not simply a case of the media – TV in particular – telling us what to like (I certainly don't let them tell me) or the record companies wanting to make "bags of cash." I'm sure that is a motivation with the major companies but, let's face it, it was ever thus.

Anyone who has lived through the last 40 or 50 years will have seen those record companies issuing thousands, perhaps millions, of LPs in the hope of striking it rich with the next big thing, with mass production and mass marketing resulting in much wasted product and chock-full deletion racks, not to mention various bankruptcies.

So basically, my point would be to the current producers in the vinyl resurgence: be wary of reaching saturation levels.

But just as small independent labels in the jazz, folk, classical and other specialist areas kept going in times past, often against economic strictures and fashion trends, so it seems to me that the similar companies of today are taking very much the same path, and I find that encouraging to say the least. Of course, the story of the fall and rise of independent jazz labels over the history of the music could be the subject of a whole other treatise, but I'll leave that here.

I note that in your review sections (which I read as guidelines, not sales pitches) many new releases and reissues are issued on either LP or CD, or as downloads, or sometimes a combination of all three, so the cost accounting for these must be pretty tight I would guess.

But as far as the high pricing of LPs is concerned, I'm also sure that the reason for it is that the specialist vinyl producers of today, such as Pure Pleasure, Craft Recordings, New Land and others have high manufacturing costs in order to produce their equally high quality standards (not to mention peripheral costs like MCPS, PRS, and artists' estate permissions if applicable).

However, it has to be said that, inasmuch as I love the LP format, especially in specialist areas of music, I have not yet bought an LP in the current run of releases; but if I see something that hits me between the eyes (such as a reissue of an item I missed out on in days gone by) then I will happily pay the price.

In passing, I have to say that I worked in the business for 40 years or so (the last 27 for two specialist distributors) and for most of that time the LP was *the* format. I picked up quite a lot over the years, some of which I sold off when I took out a late mortgage, and inevitably there are some which I now wish I had kept! Who, by the way, remembers 8-track cartridges, laser discs, quadrophonic and coloured vinyl [*coloured vinyl's still a thing – Ed*]? Anyway, I still have over 400 LPs in my retirement, mostly jazz, but also a number of old oddities I've kept over the years, and they have yielded much listening pleasure.

I do regret not having the shops around that I used to haunt and browse in, but their demise was either a matter of the passage of time or simply a sign of the times, so I've been quite philosophical about it. Be that as it may, I do like to take the occasional foray up to Ray's Jazz Shop at Foyles in Charing Cross Road!

Now it may be that the jazz LPs I *do* have – like the Blue Note and OJC reissues which are now historically valuable as well – are not of a quality equalling that of the current vinyl producers, but in general they're excellent with original liner notes, so there is no way I'm willing to replace them.

At this point I must put a word in for the series of Japanese Blue Note LP reissues that I gained access to back in the 1990s – all in 12"; although some from the early 1950s must have been 10" LPs originally. They are excellent reproductions of the original sleeves with liner notes by the likes of Leonard Feather, Nat Hentoff, Ira Gitler and others – now also historically relevant.

Resurgent: Jazz on LP

Many of these LPs also have printed inserts showing others in the reissue catalogue with notes in Japanese! I didn't get them all unfortunately, but the 170 or so that I do have I couldn't live without.

And so to CDs...Steven Tulip is right – many people (myself included) continue to like CDs. When CDs came in and gained momentum in the 1990s they just seemed the way to go – vinyl never quite went away completely, but it was hard to find for a while (and there have always been second hand outlets). I worked for a premier folk label during that time, and the company turned to CD manufacturing only, to the dismay of some of course.

It simply was not economically viable to manufacture both formats for a small specialist label. So, yes, I have a number of folk (I use the term loosely) CDs from that period... And, yes, I have a lot of jazz CDs, both new and reissued. The CD format just seemed right for jazz – and classical certainly. CD reissues of jazz from labels like Verve, Blue Note (love those RVG remastered items) and the OJC stable have been excellent, often with retrospective inlay notes to provide historical perspectives.

So I was pleased to read Kevin Whitlock's article in issue 293 about reports of the demise of CDs being greatly exaggerated. I don't know the origin of those reports, but they sound like media 'think pieces' designed to cause controversy and generate reaction – although Kevin's comments about the BPI "talking up" streaming and the vinyl revival at the expense of CDs certainly strike a chord with me.

I have no axe to grind about downloads and streaming; I'm sure they are useful tools for professionals in the business, but they're not of interest to me, I've got plenty to be going on with!

So, while I give another salute to the vinyl resurgence, the CD is still the format of choice for me certainly. I do like to buy a new CD even now – it continues to stimulate my interest in music generally, and often inspires me to dig out something I haven't played for a while, thus gaining that item a new appreciation.

And you only have to look at the review pages of your magazine, as well as the classical music publications, to see just how many CDs are being released each month – keep them coming, I say. So again, to concur with Kevin Whitlock, the CD is still an "excellent and robust" format, and I for one will "talk up" the CD at the expense of downloads and streaming.

Chris Brown, Kingston upon Thames via email

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